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Politicization and the Military: How do Militaries Adapt
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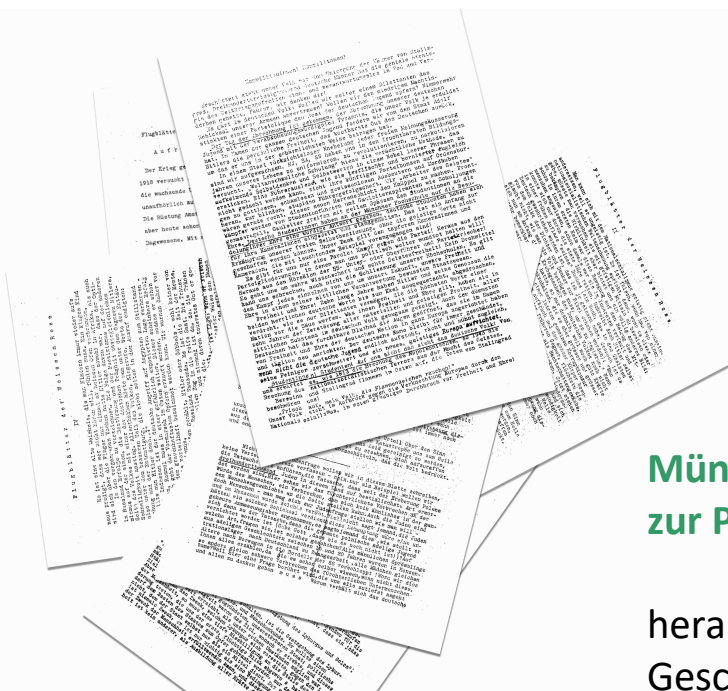
A Case Study on the German Armed Forces.

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**Politicization and the Military: How
do Militaries Adapt to Societal
Change? A Case Study on the
German Armed Forces.**

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Dr. Sebastian Schindler
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ABSTRACT

Based on research from the field of Feminist Peace and Security Studies and empirical research on the military culture of the US, this thesis provides an intersectional approach to politicization, paradigm change, and institutional change using the case of the German Armed Forces. It presupposes the interdependency of masculinity and militarization and, therefore, the crucial role hegemonic masculinity plays in the preservation of traditional military structures, as well as it being intersectional with power structures of economic and ethnonational power relations. The politicization of Generation Z in the areas of climate change, racial injustice, and gender equality directly challenge these power structures in the military. It leads to difficulties in recruiting young people who are uninterested in the militaries' current traditional culture. This leads to external and internal changes in the structure and culture of the German Armed Forces, which become more open with their measures to reduce their impact on climate change, stricter with their dealing with (suspected) cases of right-wing extremists in their ranks, and more inclusive for female soldiers and members of the LGBTQIA-community. This willingness to change and adapt to societal paradigms holds implications for the future of military culture. Suppose politicization in society can lead to a change in institutions that are infamous for their traditional culture. In that case, its influence on institutional change on a large scale must not be underestimated.

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CHAPTER 1

*Been biting my tongue till it bleeds
cry over things I don't need.
My mother told me
pick your battles wisely
but you made me angry
at the world
so I chose them all.*

Battles – Halsey (2020)

INTRODUCTION

Complaints about “the youth of today” and how young people change systems and break with traditions go back until the beginning of written philosophy. “They think they know everything, and are always quite sure about it; this, in fact, is why they overdo everything” (2012: 100) is how Aristotle complained about the young men he taught and their tendency to be “noble” over “useful”, be rude to others and naïve to the world’s workings. This sentiment has withstood the test of time. Simultaneously, there have always been voices advocating for the military as an institution for young men to build character and find structure (Santos 2018), thus countering the “shortcomings” of young men.

In 2021, the “youth of today” is better known as Generation Z. Succeeding Generation X and Generation Y, Generation Z is best known for its affinity to social media and the various protest movements like *Fridays For Future* and *Black Lives Matter* that they have put in the global focus. At the same time, the generation is often described as immensely individualistic and breaking with pre-existing notions about identity-related topics like gender and race (Dimock 2019; Parker and Igielnik 2020; Petro 2018). Further, they do not support strong hierarchies and express a need to be seen as equal parts of the team. These changes in values and expectations almost directly contradict the hierarchical and traditional structure of the military (Dunivin 1994: 535), and statistics show that Generation Z while regaining some trust in the military as an institution, does not find it very appealing as an employer (Statista 2021a, 2021b). These changes also lead to consequences: 2018 was the first year since the Iraq war

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that the US Army failed to meet its recruitment numbers by several thousands (Philipps 2018). In response to that, the US Military has started to look into how the institution can become more appealing for Generation Z (Hinton 2020; Moore 2019; Purser 2019). The German Armed Forces have acknowledged the peculiarities of this generation as well (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2020a). This lays the ground for the research objective for this thesis as well as its leading question: how have the German Armed Forces reacted to the changes in society led by Generation Z? In the process of finding the answer to this question, I argue it is important to look beyond the surface-level of advertising and recruitment and also make changes in the legal framework of the German Armed Forces and the attitude of the soldiers towards salient issues and each other into account.

Answering this question is relevant on the political and theoretical levels. As mentioned before, societal changes are predestined with the rise of new generations. Examining how institutions such as the military react and adapt to these changes (or whether they refuse or fail to do so) can give insight into how flexible institutions are and how the interdependency between society and political institutions works. Furthermore, Generation Z is a heavily politicized generation that has managed to have an enormous global impact in the few years its oldest members have been old enough to understand complex political and societal issues and become politically active – and many of them started as teenagers (Black Lives Matter 2019a; Frey 2020; Fridays For Future 2021a). On a theoretical level, while the field of Feminist Security Studies has conducted extensive research on the relationship between masculinity and militarism (Caldicott 1986; Cockburn 2010; Enloe 1998; Hartsock 1989; Myrntinen 2003; Wibben 2016), changes in the military that look into how the culture has changed have only been deeply examined by Dunivin (1994). Besides actively rallying against climate change and racial injustice, another prevalent aspect about Generation Z is them breaking with traditional gender roles (Brown 2016; Francis and Hoefel 2018; Reynolds 2021). By using an intersectional approach that acknowledges the interplay of the different power structures economy (climate change), ethnonationalism (racism), and gender (gender equality), I close the gap between the research of Feminist Security Studies and Dunivin's results and by applying this to the German Armed Forces, add to the scientific discourse.

Based on this information and background, I conceptualize the reaction of the German Armed Forces to the change in paradigms in a two-fold way. On the one hand, institutions like the military show reactions to societal changes outwardly through publications on their website and public appearances at conferences, conventions, or other arenas that allow for public

speaking. I call this form of change **external**. On the other hand, the reactions can work within the forces, including measures that are relatively easy to capture and measure, like obligatory seminars and changes in the legal framework of the German Armed Forces, as well as subjective changes and reactions as reported by members of the forces. While the analysis of the latter does not suffice to paint a representative picture, it allows for an insight into the mindset within the forces. I call this form of change **internal**. In Feminist Peace and Security Studies, qualitative research based on interviews with members of the forces that are being looked into is a commonly used method to gain an understanding of personal aspects of the structures (e.g., Baaz and Stern 2013; Harel-Shalev and Daphna-Tekoah 2016).

This multifold approach to answer the research question includes the qualitative content analysis of legally binding documents and regulations, statements/articles on the official website, and interviews with members of the German Armed Forces and the Public Relations Unit. By doing this analysis, I identify a clear difference between the external and the internal reaction to the societal paradigm change. Externally, topics like the demand for more comprehensive gender equality that includes nonbinary and trans people as well as for flat hierarchies, measures against climate change, and racial equality are being addressed and advertised as part of a more modern structure of the German Armed Forces. The German Federal Ministry of Defense has also implemented several legal measures to push for internal change. As the reports of members of the forces show, this did not always work as planned in these areas, and especially when it comes to gender equality, many prejudices prevail.

First, this master thesis contributes to the diverse literature about the relationship between masculinity and militarism created by many excellent scholars of the field of Feminist Peace and Security Studies by providing another case study that takes an intersectional approach to explain changes (or absence thereof) in military culture. By focusing on the intersectionality of the power structures at play, I spell out and explain the interdependency of the most salient issues in current times. Second, by linking the existing ways of analysis and concepts to the culture and paradigm model by Dunivin, I introduce another angle to the question of how militarism is constructed in the 21st century, how it is influenced by societal changes, and how military culture in Germany has changed in the past 25 years. Combining these different approaches thus makes it possible to fill the gap between literature from various fields and contribute to the discourse.

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In addition to that, the empirical analysis is able to shed light on another interesting issue for feminist security studies and “classical” security studies alike: while, as outlined above, there is extensive research on the role of gender identity in the military as well as some research on the change in military culture through a change in values when it comes to women’s and LGBTQIA¹ rights, so far, the differentiation between the external and internal changes in this field have not been approached. Especially against the backdrop of the continuous public interest when it comes to how the German Armed Forces deal with issues like climate change, racism, and gender equality and sexual abuse (Tagesspiegel 2019; Luhmann 2021; Zeit Online 2021), looking at the possible discrepancy between the change the Armed Forces propagate in public versus what is being said and done behind closed doors provides a valuable contribution to the state of the art. The possible derived conclusion of national armed forces inherently struggling to adapt to societal change due to their hierarchical and “separatist” culture can be used to understand conflicts between societies and their militaries and can also be applied by said forces to implement changes in more efficient ways.

The thesis is structured as follows. The second chapter includes the theoretical backdrop of the thesis, in which I introduce the feminist research on the interdependency of masculinity and militarization as well as Dunivin’s concept of the combat-masculine warrior paradigm and apply both of them to the case of the German Armed Forces. After that, I examine the three main issues Generation Z is tackling: climate change, racism/racial injustice, and gender roles and elucidate already existing problems the military faces when it comes to the recruitment of Generation Z. In the empirical analysis afterward, I evaluate data I gathered from interviews with the recruitment office about recruitment strategies like the web series “Die Rekruten” and “Besatzung Bravo” and the German Armed Forces’ appearance at the gaming convention *GamesCom* and soldiers of different ranks as well as official documents like the “Traditionserlasse” of 1965, 1982 and 2018, different parts of the official website of the German Armed Forces and reports on sustainability and suspected extremism cases before evaluating the results in the context of Dunivin’s military culture model. Lastly, the thesis concludes with a summary of the findings and their implications for future research.

¹ LGBTQIA stands for “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual“. The abbreviation often varies, and other popular versions include LGBT+, LGBTQ+, etc.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 MILITARY, GENDER AND POLITICIZATION

2.1.1 FEMINIST SECURITY STUDIES AND THE ROLE OF MASCULINITY

During the last 25 years, scholars have repeatedly been able to identify a connection between masculinity and the understanding of (gun) violence, war, and military culture. On a smaller scale, the role of masculinity has been examined in the context of school shootings of the US (Agger and Luke 2008; Johnson 2005; Kalish and Kimmel 2014; Katz 2006; Kimmel 2008a, 2008b; Kimmel 2010; Newman *et al.* 2004; Seidman 2003; Slotkin 1973; Williams 2005). In the context of war and masculinity, Hutchings (2008: 391) carved out three ways in which scholars define the relationship of masculinity to war: masculinity has been categorized as causal to war (Hartsock 1989), as a social practice of war (Goldstein 2001) or as interdependent with war (Barrett 1996; Elshtain 1995; Enloe 2000). They share the consensus that the socialization of young men in western countries is characterized by a harmful and inherently violent understanding of masculinity which leads to suppressed emotions that unload as violent aggression against others. “Real” masculinity includes a heteronormative and binary understanding of a man as a heterosexual and strong breadwinner who is into sports, beer, and eating lots of meat and does not cry in front of other people. While this description is extreme and simplified, it describes the “ideal” that has been preached to many generations, but which is rarely wholly fulfilled. This also means, by implication, any interest in “feminine” hobbies such as handicraft and fashion, any expression of emotions – besides arousal (towards cisgender² women) and excitement/disappointment about a sports team’s performance – and sexual or romantic attraction towards other men is seen as “unmanly”, weak and degrading. This concept can only exist in binary opposition to femininity which is consequently perceived as vulnerable, emotional, and the inferior gender. Homosexuality is also perceived as a “feminine” trait (see the stereotype of a gay man), and thus, discrimination against homosexual men is linked to discrimination against women. In Feminist Peace and Security Studies, this

² The term “cisgender” (short: “cis”) refers to someone’s gender identity matching their sex assigned at birth.

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understanding of masculinity has been conceptualized as *hegemonic masculinity*. Based on the idea of Connell (1995), Barrett describes hegemonic masculinity as:

“The term “hegemonic masculinity” refers to a particular idealized image of masculinity in relation to which images of femininity and other masculinities are marginalized and subordinated. The hegemonic ideal of masculinity in current Western culture is a man who is independent, risk-taking, aggressive, heterosexual and rational.” (1996: 130)

This approach is what Connell calls “normative” and comes with an inherent problem: “What is ‘normative’ about a norm hardly anyone meets?” (Connell 1995: 70). In a second step, this will also lead to the core problem militaries around the world that are still pretty much based on this strength-centered understanding of masculinity (and a weakness-centered understanding of femininity vice versa) are facing. If men do not meet this norm prevalent in the military, how will they fit in with its culture? And if men do not **want** to fit in with this norm anymore, how can recruiters convince them to enlist in the military anyway?

Men are being taught hegemonic masculinity from an early age (Myrttinen 2003: 38–39). In pop culture, weapons and war-related violence are among the main topics – movies centering around a war hero (most of the time male) are immensely popular, and first-person shooter video game series like Call of Duty and Halo remain among the most popular franchises (Windhager 2019). When going through puberty and becoming adults, weapons take on sexual imagery, and the use of weapons such as guns and missiles being used as phallic symbols have been analyzed in various contexts (Myrttinen 2003: 39–40; Caldicott 1986; Cohn 1987). The sexual indications of weapons differ from direct comparisons between phalli and guns, to the use of feminine descriptions for weaponry (“Mother of all Bombs”). Video games like Saints Row 3 also allow their players to use phallus-shaped weapons and reinforce the image. In line with this, studies about the motivators for different genders in video games showed that “[f]or men, Competition (duels, matches, high on rankings) and Destruction (guns, explosives, chaos, mayhem) are the most common primary motivations” (Yee 2016, 2017). Taking this analysis a step further leads to the conclusion that war and any other form of weapon-based violence can be seen as a sexual act (Myrttinen 2003: 40–41) – and in the hegemonic understanding of masculinity, men are characterized by a strong desire for sexual intercourse. This also means that, following the concept of hegemonic masculinity, “manly men” strive for and desire

weapon-based violence and war – while “unmanly men” that do not meet the norm do not feel the same way.

In her paper *Gender Relations as Causal in Militarization and War*, Cockburn puts the concept of hegemonic masculinity in the context of militarization and pinpoints the interdependent relationship of masculinity and militarization the exact same way I derived it from the combination of hegemonic masculinity and the sexualization of weapons:

“You see that the disposition in societies such as those we live in, characterized by a patriarchal gender regime, is towards an association of masculinity with authority, coercion and violence. It is a masculinity (and a complementary femininity) that not only serves militarism very well indeed, but *seeks and needs militarization and war for its fulfilment*.³ [...] It produces particular gender identities – armed masculinities, demoralized and angry men, victimized femininities, types of momentarily empowered women.” (2010: 152)

The patriarchal regime of domination of men over women goes back to the earliest days of democratic/political organization of states – think of the fact that only male citizens in ancient Athens held rights to participate in elections, for example – and is still present to this day. The meaning of the term “patriarchy” shifts depending on who uses it in which context (Beechey 1979). The understanding of patriarchy as a systemic hierarchy that favors men over women and causes the beforementioned domination remains the most fundamental meaning (Millet 1970). This construction of society leads to stereotypical and oftentimes entrenched expectations of the roles men and women fulfill in war situations. Men are seen as the sole aggressors and women as the sole victims (Enloe 1998). Furthermore, soldiers are socialized with these expectations and assign different roles to different genders (Eifler and Seifert 1999; Sjoberg 2010).

Lastly, Feminist Security Studies links the concept of patriarchy and gender to political institutions, building the concept of *Gendered Institutions*. In the introduction to her book *Women and Wars*, Cohn (2012: 15–20) provides a comprehensive definition of the concept. According to her, *Gendered Institutions* refers to the inherent gender-based division of labor and power within the institutions that affect how the institutions perceive their own work as well as how their members complete their tasks (Cohn 2012: 15). Oftentimes, institutions

³ Emphasis by Cockburn.

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blame the gendered distribution of labor either on individual discriminatory acts of the employer or on reasons like missing capabilities of the employees, for example, when refusing to put women in combat positions due to perceived biological and physical disadvantages (Cohn 2012: 16). Cohn refers to feminist theorists that have worked out the concept of gendered organizations/institutions and remove it from this individual level, stating:

“They argue that organizational structures, cultures, and practices are already themselves deeply gendered, and that it is the presumptions about gender ingrained in those structures, cultures, and practices that will shape whether a person is perceived as sufficiently competent, qualified, motivated, and well suited for a task or job.” (ebd.)

This means that to understand how gendered institutions work, to look one needs yet again at the systemic component: since most organizations were built and, for many years, led by white, cis, heterosexual, able-bodied men, white, cis, heterosexual, able-bodied men have also become the blueprint of the “default worker” – at least for positions that are seen as serious, and that include a level of responsibility while women mark the default for “support roles” (Cohn 2012: 17). Nowadays, that does not mean that institutions such as the military will only employ people that fit the default for such a position, but subconsciously, army recruiters expect female combatants to have the same characteristics as the men they envisioned when creating the job of a combatant (ebd.). “Doing things the right way” becomes synonymous with “doing things like a man”, and especially in a militarized context, this means that women will always be seen as having deficits and not getting the job done in the way it is supposed to get done (Cohn 2012: 18). In consequence, militaries become less inclined to integrate women into their workforce. Finally, gendered institutions are also dependent on the societal perception of gendered identifications since they need to align with the institution’s perception in order to uphold and reproduce them (Cohn 2012: 19–20). Changes in the gendered identification of society might therefore lead to changes in the gendered distribution within institutions.

2.1.2 INTERSECTIONALITY, MASCULINITY AND MILITARISM

There exists not only one dimension of power in today’s world but rather several ones: examples are skin color, ability, gender, or economics (Weeks 1998). When it comes to analyzing a system of power, it seems obvious to focus on the specific dimension that is the underlying cause for the analyzed system. In the field of Feminist (Peace and Security) Studies, scholars have rejected this approach and adopted the understanding that systems of power have to be understood as *intersectional*. Intersectionality is a concept initially created by Black

feminists to describe the relation between race and gender and how discrimination against Black women cannot simply be seen as “discrimination against Black men (racism) + discrimination against white women (sexism/misogyny)” – instead of excluding one another or operating separately, the dimensions and systems of power at play construct and amplify each other (Weldon 2008: 193–194). The concept has since been broadened and is applied to all combinations of systems of power.

Thinking intersectionally is also indispensable when looking at the connection between masculinity and militarism. Cockburn narrowed down the three most important systems of power in this context:

“The first is economic power. The second is ethnic or national power embodied in community, religious and state structures. This is often, but not uniquely, white supremacy. The third is gender power. [...] The power structures of economic class based on ownership of the means of production, the racializing power of ethno-nationalism expressed in community authorities and states and the sex/gender hierarchy *together*⁴ shape human social structures, institutions and relational processes. Together they establish positions of relative power, thereby laying down the possibilities and probabilities for individuals and groups that variously inhabit them. No single one of them produces its effects in the absence of the other two.” (2010: 150–151).

Chapter 2.2.2 contains the different issues that hold the most salience for Generation Z: climate change, racism/racial injustice, right-wing extremism, and gender equality. The second and third issues are obviously represented in the power structures identified by Cockburn as essential for the connection between masculinity and militarism. The economic power is not directly expressed in climate change, but the capitalist growth since the industrial revolution and its dependence on a majority of natural resources is discussed as one of the leading causes for the rapid rise in temperature and other aspects of climate change (Baer 2012; Clark and York 2005). In 2012, geophysicist Brad Werner argued that the current economy is actually working too well and too fast, causing the ecological system to no longer be able to keep up with the processing of carbon emissions (Hamilton 2015: x–xi). States that hold economic power and the majority of the industry are thus causing harm through this power dimension to states that do not hold the same power and are also hit exponentially more severely by consequences of climate change like natural disasters. The link between militaries and climate

⁴ Emphasis by Cockburn.

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changed has also been acknowledged by institutions like the European Union (European Parliament 2021).

2.1.3 CONSERVATISM IN THE MILITARY

A strict and traditional understanding of gender roles and racial hierarchies often implies a conservative political identity. While the term “conservative” is extremely tough to define definitely, it is not uncommon to equate it with the party affiliation of an individual, and since a lot of the initial research on the topic originates from the US, the popular categories are “conservative” and “liberal”. In his research on the divide between members of the US Military (or more specifically, the Marine Corps, which were also explicitly mentioned by Myrntinen) and civilians, Ricks stated the rise in enlisted soldiers whose values align with “overwhelmingly hard-right Republican” politicians and how “[t]he military appears to be becoming politically less representative of society, with a long-term downward trend in the number of officers willing to identify themselves as liberals. Open identification with the Republican Party is becoming the norm” (1997). When coming back home from boot camp, many of them find it hard to relate to their families and pre-enlistment friends, perceiving them as “undisciplined”, “obnoxious”, and “nasty” (ebd.). This observation aligns with the criticism of Connell regarding the norm of masculinity; the reality of life for soldiers does not align with that of civilians, which seems to be primarily based on a growing discrepancy in values and expectations.

Five years later, Holsti picked up Ricks’ thesis, and while he criticized the anecdotal evidence in Ricks’ argumentation as well as his focus on the Marine Corps (“arguably the least typical branch of the United States armed forces” (2002: 3)), he was also able to provide statistical evidence to support the thesis. According to seven surveys conducted between 1976 and 1999, there was a nearly consistent rise in the affiliation with the Republican Party among military personnel, especially among the leadership (Holsti 2002: 4–6). In 1996, 67 percent of the leadership personnel identified with the Republican Party. This trend towards the Republican Party could also be shown in later analyses of partisanship among the military (Inbody 2008; Newport 2009). With Donald Trump’s controversial candidacies, this trend continued to hold up even among younger veterans who had previously been underrepresented (Ordway 2018), and during his presidency, he also divided the veterans’ opinions with those affiliated with the Republican Party being more likely to support his work as Commander in Chief (Igielnik *et al.* 2019). On the occasion of Trump’s candidacy in the 2020 federal election,

one of the Joint Bases reminded the personnel of the “Do’s and Don’ts of political activity participation” (Joint Base San Antonio 2018).

Since this paper aims to look at how the German Armed Forces react to the paradigm shift and politicization brought by Generation Z, it is essential to shift the focus from the US-centric research to the political identification within the German Armed Forces. The German Armed Forces were founded in 1955 and work as a parliamentary military with defense as its first priority these days. This means that every deployment, as well as the budget of the German Armed Forces, needs to be approved by the German Parliament. Its main components are the Army since 1955, the Air Force and Navy since 1956, the Medical Service since 1959, and the Joint Support Service⁵ which was implemented in 2000 as a joint venture of Army, Air Force, and Navy (Bundeswehr 2021b). Currently, the German Armed Forces have over 184,000 active soldiers and are deployed in 12 countries.

At the turn of the millennium, Kozielski published a paper including data on the preferred parties and political self-assessment of men with and without experience as a soldier. According to his research, almost one third (28.3 percent) of men with military experience position themselves on the right side of the political spectrum, and most of them prefer conservative parties like the CDU/CSU (Kozielski 1998: 29). A study conducted among students of the two universities of the German Armed Forces in Germany in 2007 supported these findings and showed that 70 percent of them prefer the CDU/CSU while 4 percent identify with right-wing extremist parties. 13 percent of the students sympathize with the “new right” movement (Peters 2012). Nowadays, the leading question when it comes to the political identity of German soldiers seems to be less about the parties they feel represented by and more about the level of extremism⁶ in their ranks. In 2020, the German Federal Ministry of Defense decided to conduct another study among the soldiers to see the extent to which extremism is spread in the German Armed Forces (Klormann 2020; Naumann 2020), which has not been published yet at the time of the creation of this thesis. This follows the scandals around the special unit “Kommando Spezialkräfte” (KSK) surrounding missing weaponry and 600 of the 1.400 members being suspected cases of extremists or extremism sympathizers, which had also resulted in the dissolution of the second company of the KSK in 2020 (Zeit Online 2021). In June 2021, the German Armed Forces published a report on the application of measures to fight

⁵ Streitkräftebasis

⁶ Since the question is almost always about right-wing extremism and not left-wing extremism, I will only use the term “extremism” from this point on.

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extremism in the KSK. The report refers to a number of actions that have been implemented following the aforementioned dissolution, which a working group created in 2020 (Generalinspekteur der Bundeswehr 2021: 2). They include the restructuring of the KSK to combat “toxic leadership culture combined with a misguided understanding of the elite and extremist tendencies”⁷ which also caused the downfall of the second company (Generalinspekteur der Bundeswehr 2021: 5). Chapter 3.3 includes a deeper analysis of the measures taken.

In its second and current report, the Coordination Office for Suspected Extremism Cases of the German Federal Ministry of Defense⁸ stressed that the fight against extremism in the military is of the highest priority (Koordinierungsstelle für Extremismusverdachtsfälle BMVg 2020: 4). The investigated areas were right-wing extremism (843 cases), the “Reichsbürger” movement⁹ (53 cases), left-wing extremism (16 cases), Islamism (78 cases), and foreign extremism (26 cases) (Koordinierungsstelle für Extremismusverdachtsfälle BMVg 2020: 9–10). The report presents a detailed evaluation of the data split into the following categories: organization area, age, career groups, duty station, and residence. Since this paper focuses heavily on a generational component, the analysis of age groups is specifically relevant.

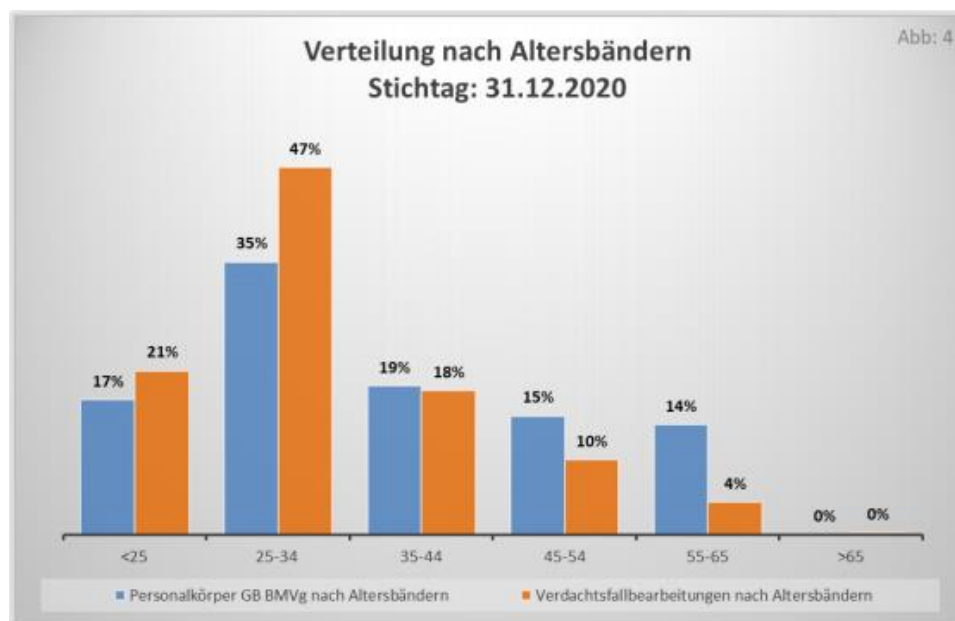


Figure 1: Distribution of suspected extremism cases in the MoD by age bands (Koordinierungsstelle für Extremismusverdachtsfälle BMVg 2020: 12)

⁷ Original quote: “[...] toxischer Führungskultur in Verbindung mit fehlgeleitetem Eliteverständnis sowie extremistischen Tendenzen, [...]“

⁸ Koordinierungsstelle für Extremismusverdachtsfälle BMVg

⁹ The Reichsbürger (“Reich Citizens”) movement rejects the German state and regards it as illegitimate. It is often linked to right-wing extremist groups and supports antisemitic and racist ideologies (BBC 2020).

The blue bar shows the percentage of an age group in the business division of the Federal Ministry of Defense, while the orange bar shows the percentage of an age group of the processed number of suspected extremism cases. It becomes apparent that 68 percent of the cases fall in the age band of 35 and younger, with 21 percent being under the age of 25. In these age bands, suspected extremism cases are also overrepresented compared to the percentage they make up of the staff. There appear to be no studies about the age distribution among extremists in general; when it comes to right-wing extremism/xenophobic attacks, the Bavarian Office for the Protection of the Constitution mentions that most suspects in 2020 were men between the age of 18 to 25 (Bayerisches Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz 2020) which aligns with the results shown above. Another study concluded that the age of suspects in extremist attacks in North Rhine-Westphalia slowly rises, with the average age being 31 in 2017 (Laube *et al.* 2019: 10–11).

2.1.4 THE COMBAT-MASCULINE WARRIOR PARADIGM

In order to analyze the ways in which the German Armed Forces react to the paradigm shift in Generation Z, one needs to understand two other changes: first, the change in expectations and values of the new generation, and second, the change in expectations and values within the German Armed Forces, starting with the latter. Almost 30 years ago, Karen O. Dunivin (1994) published a paper analyzing the change in US military culture, outlining the change in paradigms and the following change in models.¹⁰ Her work lays the ground for the theoretical base of this paper. The ideal type of “culture” is hereby defined as a learned and broadly shared way of life that is adaptive to changing conditions and inherently symbolic (Dunivin 1994: 533). Military culture fulfills all of these criteria and can therefore be considered its own cultural microcosmos.

The first necessary step to understand the construction of (military) culture is the distinction between “paradigms” and “models”. Dunivin defines paradigms as:

“[A] paradigm is the underlying collection of broad, often unstated, assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes that shape our ideal types and models. A paradigm is a particular perspective or view of the world. As the foundation for our values, attitudes, and notions, paradigms are important because they influence the kinds of ideal types and models we create to explain social phenomena.” (1994: 532)

¹⁰ Dunivin also published a second report on this topic in 1997 within the US Military Press. Her first work from 1994 will remain the primary quotation on this paper since it was published in a scientific journal.

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In contrast to paradigms, models – which are based on paradigms – “organize complex ideal types so we can simplify and understand social phenomena” (Dunivin 1994: 532). In her work, Dunivin construes the *combat-masculine warrior* paradigm (CMW), which combines the beforementioned analysis of hegemonic masculinity and militarization by Cockburn and the combat-centered nature of the military. According to her, the CMW paradigm is the “essence of military culture” (1994: 533–534).

In the second step, a definition of the components of “culture” is needed. Dunivin divides culture into six subcategories: ethnics/customs, enculturation, laws/policies, force structure, attitudes, and majority/minority interactions (Dunivin 1994: 534–537). Enculturation represents the paradigm, in this case, the CMW paradigm. Ethnics/Customs refers to ethical components like “honor codes” that shape the ethical understanding of the enlisted soldiers while laws/policies form the legal component. Force structure, attitudes, and majority/minority interactions refer to the interpersonal communication of the military.

Dunivin identifies two models of military culture: the traditional model and the evolving model. The traditional model reflects the conservative attitude of the military, which was described in the former subchapter: “a homogenous male force, masculine values and norms, and exclusionary laws and policies” (Dunivin 1994: 534). Its laws/policies are exclusionary against women, non-heterosexual and non-white men, which enforces a homogenous, separatist, and hostile environment.

Table 1

U.S. Military Culture

| Cultural Variable | Traditional Model | Evolving Model |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Ethnics/Customs | Conservatism, Moralism | Conservatism, Moralism |
| Enculturation | Combat, Masculine Warrior | Combat Masculine Warrior |
| Laws/Policies | Exclusion | Inclusion |
| Force Structure | Homogeneity | Heterogeneity |
| Attitudes | Separatism | Egalitarianism |
| Majority/Minority Interactions | Hostility | Tolerance |

Figure 2: The different cultural variables of the traditional and the evolving model (Dunivin 1994: 535)

In some respects, Dunivin recognizes an evolution towards more liberal and inclusionary values, represented in the evolving model. Since 1948, every person has a right to serve in the

2.1 MILITARY, GENDER AND POLITICIZATION

armed forces “without regard to race, color, religion or national origin”, women were not included at this point. Due to growing social pressure and the aim to reflect society, exclusionary laws discriminating against non-white and non-heterosexual men were slowly rescinded, and since 1993, women are able to serve aboard combat aircraft and ships (Dunivin 1994: 538). The environment became more inclusive, heterogenous, egalitarian, and tolerant.

Dunivin also quotes both statistical and anecdotal evidence showing a change in attitude in the military. In 1992, nearly 75 percent of service members supported the distribution of combat assignments to the best-qualified person, regardless of gender or sex (Dunivin 1994: 539). While the change seemed ongoing and unstoppable, Dunivin acknowledges the inevitable clash between the CMW paradigm and the demanded societal changes towards a more inclusive military. According to her, the military owes its success to the CMW paradigm and thus profits from it – a stance supported by traditionalists (Dunivin 1994: 541). She quotes an interview with two marines who stated:

“The institutional values that once defined a proud force are rapidly being eroded by inroads into its culture by feminist and homosexual-interest groups who view the military as a platform for their politically correct agendas.” (ebd.)

Can Dunivin’s work be applied to the German Armed Forces? I argue it absolutely can. As described earlier, a conservative mindset was and is prevalent within the German Armed Forces and supports the CMW paradigm. Another strong case can be made when it comes to exclusionary laws and policies. In regard to women in the German Armed Forces, Germany only allowed women to serve as full members of the military after a lost lawsuit. In 1996, Tanja Kreil’s application for weapon electronics maintenance was rejected quoting Article 12a (4) of the Grundgesetz (basic law/constitution), which stated that women could be part of the military as nurses or musicians but “may on no account render service involving the use of arms”. She then brought an action in the Administrative Court of Hannover, claiming a breach of Community Law since her application was rejected on the basis of her sex. The European Court of Justice ruled in her favor, and since 2001, women are allowed to serve in all branches (European Court of Justice 2000). Twenty years later, women make up 12,5 percent of the German Armed Forces personnel (Bundeswehr 2021a).

In the case of homosexual men, the past policies of the German Armed Forces based themselves on applicable law. Until 1994, Section 175 of the German Criminal Code declared

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homosexual acts between men¹¹ a crime. Soldiers sentenced after this section had to fear losing their rank until 1969; for young recruits between the age of 18 to 21, homosexual acts continued to remain criminal after that (Storkmann 2018: 6). The homophobic and exclusionary legal framework was also mirrored in the environment created by the soldiers. When standing and moving in formations, they were required to hold 80 centimeters distance to their comrades, and a common “joke” went: “79 centimeters is gay, 81 centimeters is desertion”, followed by “Deserting comrades or getting too close to them – those are the deadly sins of soldiering”¹² (Storkmann 2018: 8). It was not until 1994 that Section 175 was deleted from the Criminal Code, and on May 20, 2021, the German Parliament passed a law that enables rehabilitation and financial compensation for men that faced discrimination based on their homosexuality in the German Armed Forces and the National People’s Army (Schmid 2021).

Both examples clearly demonstrate that the traditional model was applicable to the German Armed Forces and that changes similar to the ones described in Dunivin’s evolving model are being made. The core point remains with the CMW paradigm, which can also be seen when looking at the conservative (and in parts extremist) identity of German soldiers. Proving this is crucial because, in the end, change in the military stands and falls with the CMW paradigm. If the military abandons the paradigm, it can keep up with the ongoing liberalization of society. If it remains, the inclusion of non-white, non-male, and non-heterosexual individuals will never be entirely possible (Dunivin 1994: 543–544). Applying the intersectional approach, I extend the CMW paradigm to not only include the gender aspect but the economic/climate change and racism component as well. In order to break the CMW paradigm, all of these power structures need to be dismantled within the German Armed Forces since they construct and amplify each other.

2.2. GENERATION Z AND ITS PARADIGM CHANGE

After having examined the ongoing changes in culture within the German Armed Forces, a similar examination of the generation urging them to change is necessary. This section focuses on defining who “Generation Z” is and what values it represents. The last part outlines the

¹¹ Homosexual women were exempt from that section since female sexuality was seen as “passive” and male sexuality as “aggressive” and a threat to young men under the age of 21 (Bundesverfassungsgericht 1997: 52).

¹² Original quotes: “79cm sind schwul, 81cm sind Fahnenflucht“ and “Kameraden im Stich lassen oder ihnen zu nahe kommen – damit waren die Todsünden des Soldatentums benannt”

2.2. GENERATION Z AND ITS PARADIGM CHANGE

paradigm change happening with Generation Z and puts it into context in regard to the CMW paradigm.

2.2.1 WHO IS GENERATION Z?

“Generation Z” is a term often used but rarely defined these days. It describes the generation born between the mid-to-late 1990s to the early 2010s¹³, which means its members are currently around 10 to 25 years old. Generation Z succeeds Generation Y/Millennials (born in the early 1980s to mid-1990s) and precedes Generation Alpha (born mid-2010’s to now). Due to this, Generation Z was raised mainly by members of Generation X or elder Millennials.

Every generation has certain significant events which shape its perception of the world, its values, and ideals – and, therefore, its paradigms. These events can be of political, economic, or societal nature alike and even vary between the elder and the younger members of a generation. Elder Generation Z was around six years old when 9/11 happened, while younger Generation Z learns about it as a historical event they did not live to witness yet. It is the first generation to have access to the internet and smart devices from childhood or adolescence on – an influence whose consequences are yet to be researched (Dimock 2019). Other formative circumstances that affect all of Generation Z are the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, and ongoing debates about (systemic) racism, sexism, sexuality, and gender identity (Parker *et al.* 2019; Parker and Igielnik 2020). These ongoing debates and the generation’s reaction to it are also what it has become famous for. Protest movements like *Fridays for Future* and *Black Lives Matter*¹⁴ were founded by or have gained immense momentum through the willingness of Generation Z to take their opinions to the streets. Due to this, Generation Z is perceived as a heavily politicized generation and has earned nicknames like “Generation Green”¹⁵ (Choudhary 2020).

2.2.2 THE PARADIGM CHANGE

So that one may argue that a paradigm change is happening with Generation Z, a comparison with the paradigms of the preceding generation needs to be drawn. In line with Dunivin’s definition of a paradigm, I conduct this comparison by focusing on the values of Generation Z in contrast with those of preceding generations to draw conclusions about the paradigms. While

¹³ The exact dates vary slightly from source to source. The German Armed Forces officially state 1995 as the first year of birth for Generation Z (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2020a: 9).

¹⁴ While the *Black Lives Matter* movement has been around since 2013 and was founded by three Millennial women (Black Lives Matter 2019a), it has gained a lot of support within Generation Z in the last three years.

¹⁵ This particular source groups Generation Z and Generation Y since most published studies focus on Generation Y.

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many articles like to group Generation Z and Generation Y together, there are good arguments to separate the two. Crucial developments like social media and the resulting global connection – which heavily influence the international organization of protests and lead to more awareness of global issues – have not been around when Generation Y was growing up. Additionally, Generation Z grew up in a time that was overflowing with significant societal changes:

“Simultaneously, their minds and views of the world were shaped in the midst of the economic turmoil of the Great Recession. They’ve lived through the legalization of gay marriage and marijuana, and the threats of terrorism, global warming and gun violence. [...] Similarly, Gen Z is coming of age in an economy with an unemployment rate of 4%. Members of this powerful generation are bringing with them an entirely different set of expectations than Millennials. Some have even labeled Gen Z as the “Anti-Millennial Generation.”” (Petro 2018)

Growing up in times marked by an abundance of world-changing events while having the technological possibilities to access information from around the world at any point in time is a combination of circumstances that has not existed before. Thus, it is not surprising that this generation makes use of the given possibilities and has decided to take matters into their own hands and demand changes to be made (Biederman *et al.* 2020). The effects are impressive: in 2018, the Generation Z-organized *March for Our Lives* protest in response to the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School was able to move over 1.2 million people to march for stricter gun control legislation (Davis 2020).

Studies show that Generation Z has three “main topics” they focus on and fight for more passionately than other generations before: **climate change**, **racism/racial injustice and right-wing extremism**, and **gender equality**. These three categories will remain as the structure for the following chapters to analyze Generation Z’s and the German Armed Forces’ attitude and (changing) measures concerning these issues.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The topic of climate change in Generation Z has two different dimensions – an economic and a political dimension. A lot of research on this generation is being conducted by economic institutions to give recommendations on how to be more appealing to the next generation of consumers. In 2020, it was common not to differentiate between Generation Z and Generation Y when discussing their attitude towards sustainability. Both generations seemed to be on the same page with regards to sustainable consumerism, with 73 percent of Generation Y and 62

2.2. GENERATION Z AND ITS PARADIGM CHANGE

percent of Generation Z preferring to buy from sustainable brands and being willing to pay more for their goods – 50 percent of Generation Y and 54 percent of Generation Z were willing to spend 10 percent or more (Petro 2020). In comparison, only 34 percent of baby boomers supported the same stance (Choudhary 2020). In 2021, the narrative shifted towards Generation Z taking the lead on environmental issues. A study from 2020 conducted among 27,000 people from 27 countries was able to outline the ongoing change towards an environmentally friendly lifestyle. Generation Z is most likely to support and actively change in this direction.

Desire to Change Lifestyle

Average of 27 Countries, by Generation, 2020

Desire to change lifestyle to be more...

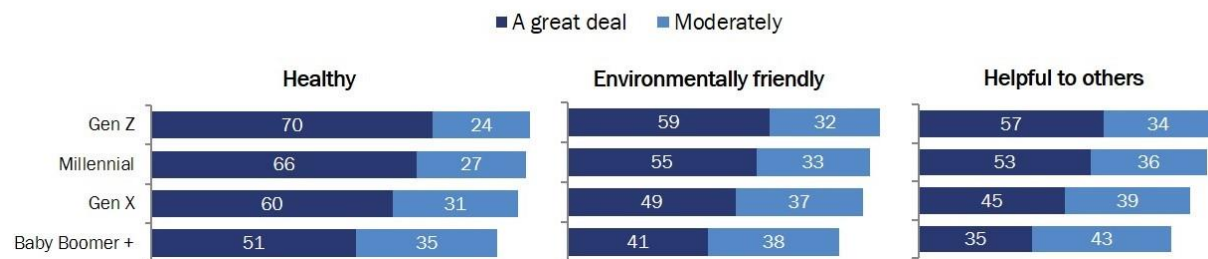


Figure 3: Desire to change lifestyle, sorted by generation (Hassim 2021)

It becomes clear that the change in values has been going on for a while and did not suddenly appear with Generation Z. However, it is the generation with the highest majority (74 percent) actively “claiming to have made some or major changes to be more environmentally friendly” (Hassim 2021). This is also due to Generation Z being most likely to actually feel ashamed about not implementing such changes (ebd.), which also shows the significance of the topic for this generation compared to its predecessors. Forbes Magazine, one of the most influential economic newspapers, even speaks of a revolution, stating: “The pandemic didn’t start the sustainability revolution, but it has put it into hyperdrive, and Gen Z is in the driver’s seat.” (Petro 2021).

This leads to the political dimension of climate change prevalent in Generation Z. While the topic of climate change and its consequences have been known for several years, Generation Z has taken the politicization of this issue to another level. In 2018, Greta Thunberg – at this point 15 years old – has started a school strike in front of the Swedish Parliament to urge them to take measures against the ongoing climate crisis (Fridays For Future 2021a). Within a short time, Greta was joined by young people around the world in her weekly strikes for climate action, and the movement *Fridays For Future* was born. During the last three years, the

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movement has taken over the world, and strikes are regularly held on every continent, including several global climate strikes, which include all local groups on the same date.



Figure 4: Map of all *Fridays For Future* strikes in the last two and next four weeks¹⁶ (Fridays For Future 2021c)

In 2019, 400 *Fridays For Future* activists from 38 countries drew up the “Declaration of Lausanne”, stating their demands for politicians and decision-makers:

- “1. Keep the global temperature rise below 1,5 °C compared to pre-industrial levels.
2. Ensure climate justice and equity.
3. Listen to the best united science currently available.” (Fridays For Future 2019)

On their website, *Fridays For Future* shares instructions on how to strike, what songs to sing during the strikes, and how action can be taken to make a difference. The movement launched an EU Citizen Initiative (ECI) to urge the European Commission to take countermeasures to the climate crisis¹⁷, and their activists held speeches in front of the UN and EU as well as in popular formats like TEDxYouth (Fridays For Future 2021b). They have also since gained support from “sister organizations” like *Scientists For Future* and *Parents For Future*.

The German Institute for Generation Research (“Institut für Generationenforschung“) has taken a closer look at how the politicization of Generation Z in the context of climate change is taking place. According to them, there is a discrepancy between the personal consumerism

¹⁶ As of June 15, 2021.

¹⁷ <https://eci.fridaysforfuture.org/en/>

2.2. GENERATION Z AND ITS PARADIGM CHANGE

choices of Generation Z and their demands as a movement, with only one in four people considering foregoing air travel (Maas 2019: 34). While there is a huge focus on political issues like climate change and sustainability, Generation Z is skeptical towards political institutions and does not feel heard or taken seriously by them – a claim that seems to be repeatedly proven since political agendas are often subject to change depending on upcoming elections and changing governments (Maas 2019: 35). The reason for the immense political involvement of the generation seems to be dependent on several factors: first, the presence of social media. As stated earlier, social media makes it enormously easy to connect and organize with people around the globe as well as exchange ideals and visions. Second, Generation Z (especially in western countries) lives very comfortably and can afford to become politically active without having to allocate their time to generating income and supporting their families and themselves. Third, *Fridays For Future* has a relatable and influential leadership that is able to connect to their supporters and send clear messages of “Us versus Them.” (ebd.). It is easy for a whole generation to identify with movement’s demands and thus support it in its cause. Nonetheless, it is also important to note that the privilege of striking is not available to everyone. In Germany, most of the protesters are students from the “Gymnasium” attending the strikes, while students of “lower” educational background tend to join them less (Rucht 2019: 8). At the same time, support for social movements does not only show through the participation in protests but also via sharing their contents, spreading the word, and raising awareness through other possible means. Dismissing the significance of the topic for the whole generation based on the demographic of the students present might therefore seem like a stretch and neglect other aspects of social movements.

RACISM/RACIAL INJUSTICE AND RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM

The second big issue Generation Z is a passionate advocate for is the fight against racism and racial injustice. Similar to *Fridays For Future*, the *Black Lives Matter* movement has become the motor and mouthpiece of a generation. Founded in 2013 as a response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin’s murderer in the US, *Black Lives Matter* is advocating for reforming the system to end police brutality and raise awareness for the ongoing discrimination against Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) (Black Lives Matter 2020). In the last eight years, *Black Lives Matter* has become a global movement organizing global protests and actions (Black Lives Matter 2019b), and local/national subgroups have been founded. On their websites, the organizers share resources and safety guidelines for protesters. After the murder

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of George Floyd in 2020, the movement took off globally, and maps tracing the protests paint a picture similar to *Fridays For Future*.

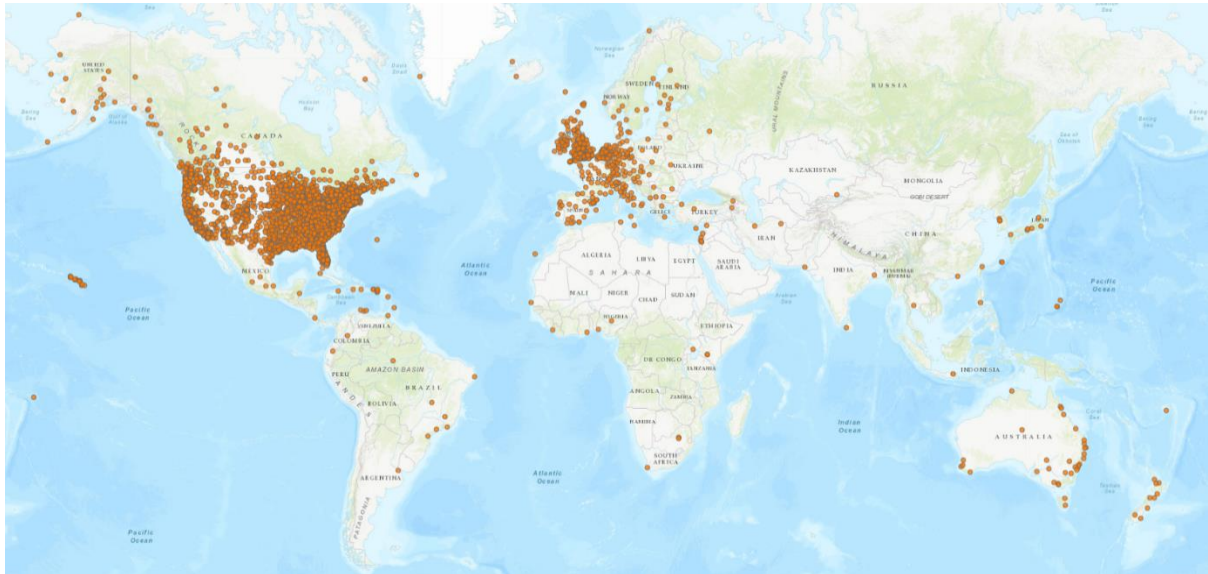


Figure 5: Map of all *Black Lives Matter* protests following the murder of George Floyd¹⁸ (Smith 2020)

While Generation Z did not found the movement, it has gained immense support and taken on a central role in their political agenda. A survey concluded that around 18 percent of Generation Z consider racism one of the biggest problems of today's society, ranking it higher than climate change (Marzullo 2021). Setting social movements off against each other might not be the best way to go in a world that is facing many issues at the same time; thus, I will still consider the issues and movement equally. With the *Black Lives Matter* movement not being as decentralized as *Fridays For Future*, most of the research is very US-centric. Nonetheless, the German "branch" of the organization, as well as the related organization *Silent Demo*, do have a large following, and the issue of racism and racial injustice is taking on a more central role in the German discourse as well. *Black Lives Matter* protests in Germany lead to tens of thousands of people protesting against police brutality and racism, most of them part of Generation Z (Hofer 2020; Peter 2020). Additionally, a demonstration against racial injustice organized by the German organization *Unteilbar* on October 13, 2018, led to 240,000 people protesting in Berlin (Unteilbar 2021). Thus, while US-centric studies cannot just be transferred analogously to Germany, the sentiment of the results can still give an insight into the degree of salience the topic holds for Generation Z.

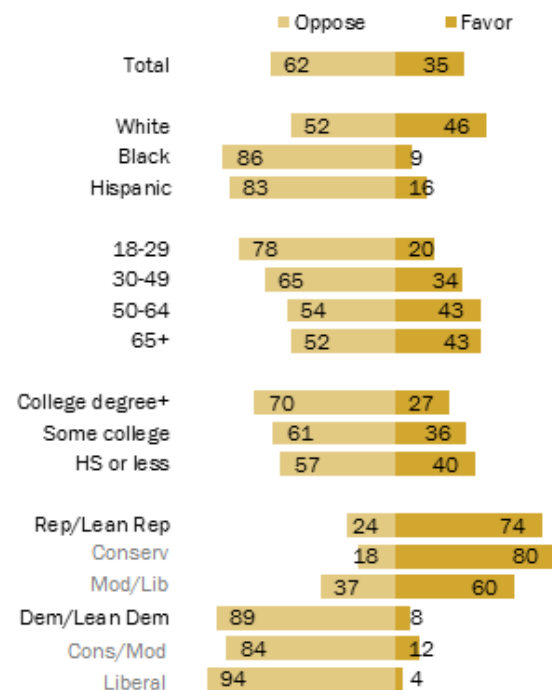
¹⁸ Last update: November 18, 2020

2.2. GENERATION Z AND ITS PARADIGM CHANGE

A poll among approximately 39,000 US American members of Generation Z found that 88 percent of them think that Black people face discrimination in the US, nearly 90 percent of the respondents support the *Black Lives Matter* organization, and 77 percent have already participated in a protest against racial injustice (Davis 2020). A significantly smaller study focused on the impact of current events in regard to police brutality, finding that while 60 percent of the respondents said these events affected their mental health, 64 percent were hopeful because of the efforts of the *Black Lives Matter* movement (ebd.). As a result of the impact the current situation has on them, 72 percent of respondents expect their schools to react to the issues, and 59 percent of them said the schools failing to do so would negatively impact the students' perception of their school (ebd.). This demand for change does not limit itself to schools and universities, as the protests show, and when taking the demographic aspect into account, Generation Z's efforts are likely to leave a lasting impact. This generation is more racially diverse than any of its predecessors and makes up the most significant share of the upcoming voter population, so their demands will have to be considered by future political leadership (Frey 2020). The demographic change does support the paradigm change in this regard since it favors circumstances on which change can grow. One example that illustrates the shift in attitude across generations is the opinions about the border wall President Trump wanted to build along the US-Mexican border. The debate around the topic was highly characterized by stereotyping of immigrants from Mexico, and it was evident that the primary motivator behind the border wall plans was racism against Hispanic immigrants (Brownstein 2019; Demata 2017; Huber 2016).

Large majority of Republicans favor border wall; Democrats broadly oppose

% who ___ building wall along entire border with Mexico



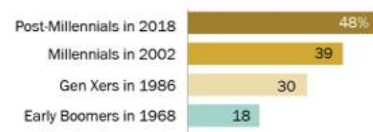
Note: Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey conducted Feb. 7-12, 2017.

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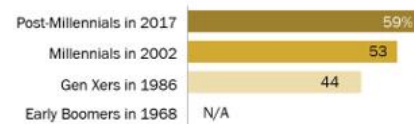
Nearly half of post-Millennials are racial or ethnic minorities

% of 6- to 21-year-olds who are nonwhite



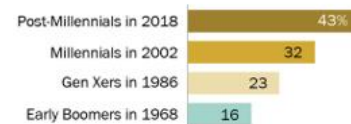
More post-Millennials pursuing college

Among 18- to 20-year-olds who are no longer in high school, % enrolled in college



Post-Millennials more likely than Millennials to live with a college-educated parent

% of 6- to 17-year-olds living with a parent who has at least a bachelor's degree



Note: Nonwhites include blacks, Hispanics, other races and people who identify with more than one race.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 1968, 1986, 2002 and 2018 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (IPUMS) and 1986, 2002 and 2017 Current Population Survey October Supplement (IPUMS). "Early Benchmarks Show Post-Millennials on Track to Be Most Diverse, Best-Educated Generation Yet"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 6 (left): Distribution of support and opposition of the border wall (Pew Research Center 2017)

Figure 7 (right): Comparison of ethnicities and college education between generations (Fry and Parker 2018)

In 2017, 78 percent of 18- to 29-year-olds (Generation Z + Generation Y) opposed the border wall, while older generations 50+ were almost evenly split about the issue. Looking at the distribution by ethnicity as well as by political affiliation, it becomes clear again that racially motivated prejudices are likely to have played a role in the respondents' answers. A higher degree of education leads to a higher percentage of people opposing the border wall, and with younger generations being more likely to complete college degrees than older generations (Wong 2019), the likelihood of future decision-makers gaining support for similar policies further decreases. Thus, several are factors coming into play that accelerate and encourage the paradigm change in regard to racial injustice that Generation Z brings along: higher awareness, the possibility to connect, a rise in education level, and the diversity within the generation itself.

While *Black Lives Matter* is the most popular and tangible example of politicization against racial injustice, there is another aspect of racism that must not be overlooked: discrimination against (racial/ethnic) minorities from right-wing extremist groups. As I outlined in chapter 2.1.3, the German Armed Forces put a strong focus on the topic of right-wing extremism within their rows. On February 19, 2020, a German citizen committed an extremism-motivated attack and killed nine people. According to a rant he had posted online prior to the attack, he explicitly targeted members of minority groups and called for “complete extermination” of many “races or cultures in our midst” (McHugh *et al.* 2020). The attack led to the founding of an initiative called *Initiative 19. Februar Hanau* around family members of the victims which organized a massive number of demonstrations against right-wing extremism even months after the tragedy (Initiative 19. Februar Hanau 2020). On the first anniversary of the attack, 3,000 people demonstrated in Frankfurt (Süddeutsche Zeitung 2021), continuously claiming that attacks like this are not isolated cases and demanding stronger measures against racism and right-wing extremism.

GENDER EQUALITY

The third huge topic for Generation Z and arguably the most important one for this thesis is Gender Equality. That includes the fight against sexual harassment, the support for more acceptance of the LGBTQIA-Community, and, most prevalently, a shift in the understanding of gender identity. The reason for sexuality being included in this subject area is due to the fact that many discriminatory viewpoints on non-heterosexual sexualities stem from preconceptions about gender norms (as briefly mentioned in chapter 2.1). Yet again, most polls and studies were conducted by economic research centers and consulting companies and US-centric. Just as with the section about racial injustice, I argue that this does not mean the data is not also representative. As a study by the German poll institute *Ipsos* showed, the attitude of German Generation Z when it comes to topics of representation of members of the LGBTQIA-Community and acceptance of different gender identities does mostly align with global survey results with around five percentage points of German respondents tending to be less supportive in most aspects (the violet graph depicts the German results, the pink one the global comparison).

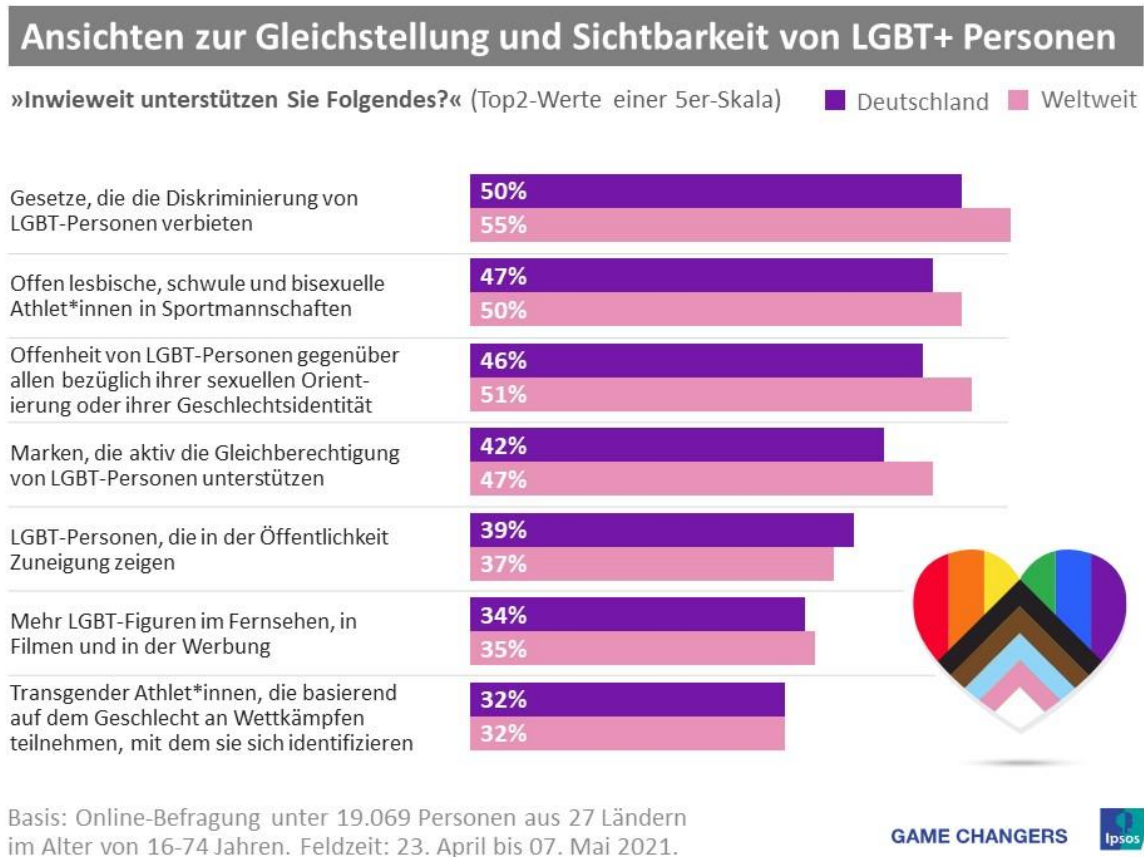


Figure 8: Views on equality and visibility of LGBT+ people (Freudenthal 2021)

Since, as I have outlined in Chapter 2.1, gender identity and especially the understanding of masculinity play a crucial role in military culture, the focus of this subchapter will lie in the changes of the importance and conceptualization of gender identity in Generation Z. One of the earliest studies about sexuality and gender identity was conducted in 2016 among 1,000 participants from Generation Z and Generation Y, so most of the Generation Z-respondents were between 13 to 20 years old. The study showed that less than 50 percent of the respondents identified as heterosexual, and 56 percent knew someone who uses gender-neutral pronouns such as they/them (Brown 2016) – in 2018, this figure amounted to 35 percent of Generation Z (Vultaggio 2020). When it came to the question of whether gender still defines a person as much as it used to, 78 percent of the Generation Z respondents agreed somewhat or strongly that this is not the case anymore (Brown 2016).

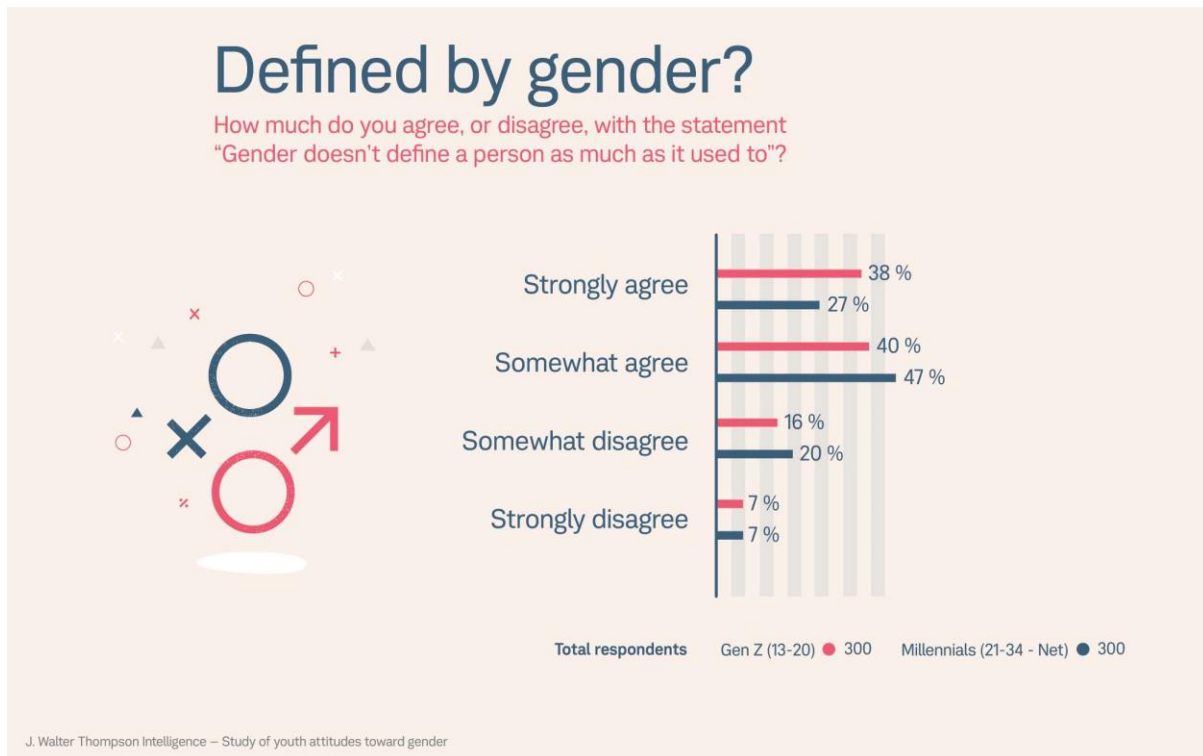


Figure 9: Responses to “Gender doesn’t define a person as much as it used to” (Brown 2016)

In 2021, the marketing consulting company *bigeye* conducted another study on the topic, titled “Beyond the Binary”, which had a considerable impact on the economic sphere (Fore 2020; Kenney 2020; Landsverk 2021). The study involved 1,957 US Americans of various ages, which the agency divided by generation: 418 members of Generation Z (18 to 24), 468 members of Generation Y (25 to 39), 428 members of Generation X (40 to 55), 482 members of the Baby Boomer Generation (56 to 74) and 161 members of the Silent Generation (75+) (*bigeye* 2021: 2). The study included questions about gender identity, gender expression¹⁹, gendered parenting choices, and preferences when it comes to gender-based marketing. Generally speaking, it is Generation Y that has the most liberal stance on the discussed topics, followed by Generation Z, which is the most open generation towards non-binary identities and the most likely to explore gender identities different from their own (*bigeye* 2021: 77). When looking into the answers to questions about sex and gender (questions 14 and 15), the results paint an interesting picture: while 49 percent of Generation Z disagree with a binary understanding of sex, *bigeye* lists Generation Y as the strongest supporter of a spectral understanding of gender (2021: 5–6) without clarifying the exact number of respondents of Generation Z that support that statement. Asked whether reproductive organs define gender,

¹⁹ “Gender expression“ describes the way someone outwardly presents their gender through clothing, behavior, etc., which is typically associated with a specific gender identity. (Human Rights Campaign 2021).

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only 54 percent of Generation Z agree (bigeye 2021: 7). The youngest generation is also the most likely to have friends who identify as transgender (27 percent), nonbinary/gender non-conforming (23 percent), or genderfluid (14 percent; bigeye 2021: 12). When it comes to identification with masculinity or femininity or characteristics that are usually associated with these identities, like feeling tough-skinned versus feeling sensitive, most respondents identified with the traits associated with their identity (bigeye 2021: 18–21). Only 27 percent of Generation Z stated that their feelings about this are constant and do not change depending on factors like the situation they are in or the people they are with (bigeye 2021: 22). Generation Z parents are also most supportive of gender-neutral pre-school education for their children, with 53 percent of the respondents approving to some degree (bigeye 2021: 51). Lastly, when asked their top priorities of actions they want companies to take, 40 percent of Generation Z respondents wanted to see support for diversity, equity, and inclusion (bigeye 2021: 67). This shows that even though Generation Y statistically is the more liberal generation, Generation Z is continuing and further pushing the change in influential fields like education. When asked a final, open-ended question about the future of the gender binary, 26 percent of the answers were negative in tone, while 21 percent were positive (bigeye 2021: 75). Bigeye did not put all the answers in their survey. One needs to be wary of whether the examples they chose for positive and negative responses were selected to deliberately depict a particular distribution among the generation. Still, all the samples for positive answers came from Generation Z and Generation Y. In contrast, the negative examples – one of which describes the change away from the binary as “brainwashing” – were from answers given by Baby Boomer and Generation X respondents (ebd.).

2.3 EFFECT ON THE MILITARY

As outlined in detail in the preceding subchapters, the changing values and therefore changing paradigms in Generation Z do not fit in with the conservative and CWM-led culture of the military. Militaries around the world are facing the challenge of having to recruit the generation that is leading protests on Climate Change (“Fridays For Future”) while being among the biggest producers of greenhouse gases (European Parliament 2021). Generation Z also leads and partakes in protests on race and gender equality (“Black Lives Matter”, “Me

Too”²⁰) while right-wing extremism and sexual harassment cases are on the rise within the German Armed Forces (Tagesspiegel 2019; Zeit Online 2021).

In 2018, the US military started experiencing the consequences of this change. For the first time since the Iraq war, the US Army fell short of meeting its recruitment numbers. The military traced this issue back to two main courses: one, a strong economy that offers a variety of job prospects to possible recruits, and two, a declining number of applicants that fulfill the requirements of the US Army. While the failure to meet the numbers does not automatically signal the Army’s downfall (especially since the Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps were able to meet their required numbers), it shows “a sign of growing cultural and economic changes that, if not addressed, could hollow out the Army from within” (Philipps 2018). Following this, the military implemented changes (Fadel 2019) which seem to be based on some recommendation guidelines for the military in regard to Generation Z published by outsiders as well as military personnel itself. Hinton identifies the problem in two different areas of the leadership culture. First, Generation Z tends to question hierarchies and commands; they seem pointless to them more than preceding generations, which means military leaders need to illustrate the relevance of the tasks actively. Second, there appears to be an information gap between the recruits’ expectations and the leadership personnel when it comes to decision-making processes – this gap needs to be closed through communication and cooperation (Hinton 2020). One year earlier, Senior Master Sgt. Chris C. Moore made similar observations and urged the military to become a motivator for a generation full of people that “want their efforts to matter and make a difference” (2019). Surveys among Generation Z show that the efforts did make a difference in the way its members perceive the military, with trust levels for the military rising by six percentage points from 60 percent to 66 percent between 2019 and 2020 (Statista 2021a). Still, only five percent of respondents of another survey consider any military branch their future field of work (Statista 2021b).

The German Armed Forces have also seen a nearly constant decline in recruitments over the last ten years. Upon request, they provided me the exact number of recruitments each year between 2010 and 2020 divided by gender.

²⁰ While the activism against sexual harassment and the situation in the German Armed Forces are not included in the scope of this paper, I still mention it in this list since some of the interviewed soldiers referred to these cases.

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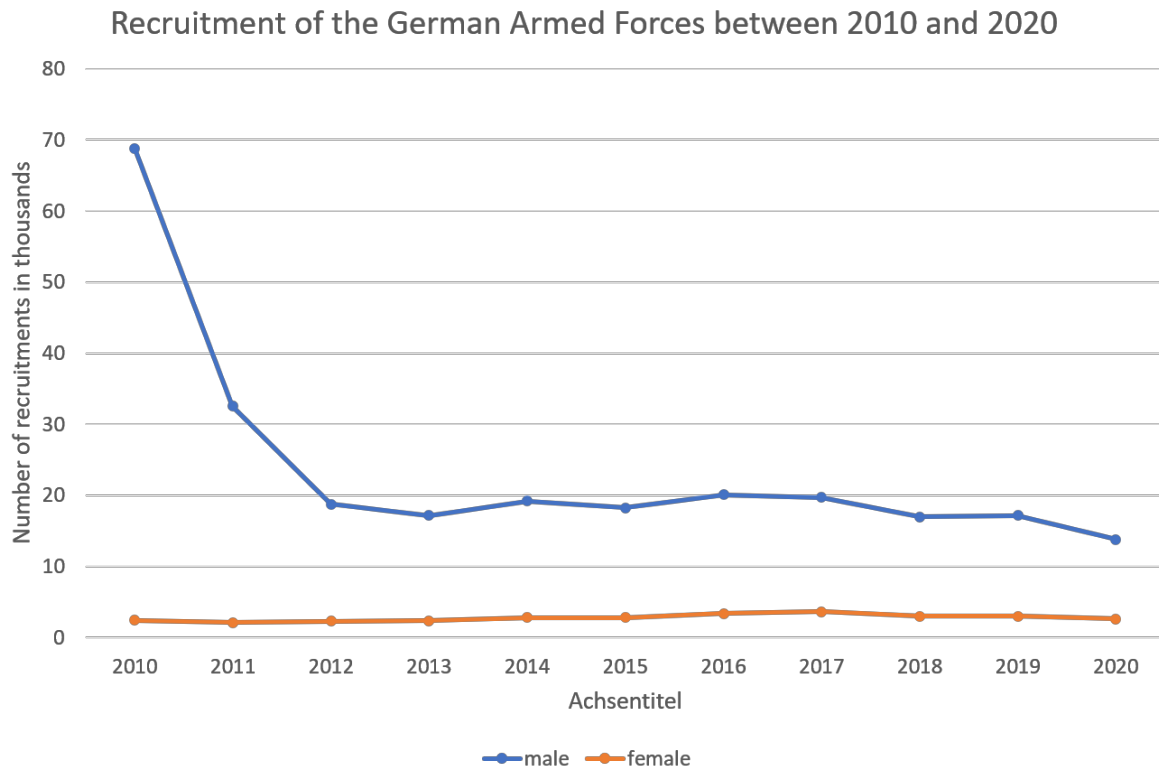


Figure 10: Recruitment of the German Armed Forces between 2010 and 2020

Prior to 2011, young men in Germany had to complete a year of compulsory military service either as part of the military or as a form of civil service. In March 2011, the German Parliament decided to abolish the mandatory military service by July 2011 (Weinlein 2011), which explains the drop in recruitment numbers for male soldiers the same and the following year. From 2012 to 2019, the number of male recruits remained relatively constant with a small peak around 2016 and 2017 which I suspect might be related to the Schengen crisis motivating more people to enlist in the military. In 2020, the recruitment numbers for male recruits took the biggest decline since 2012. In comparison, the recruitment numbers for female recruits remained constant through the years, with a small peak around 2016 and 2017 as well. Since the compulsory military service law never applied to women, those who enlisted always did due to intrinsic motivation, which explains the minor fluctuations. Similarly to the US Military, the German Armed Forces have started to focus on the expectations and characteristics of Generation Z when it comes to becoming more appealing as an employment option (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2020a). When asked about how the recruitment strategies have been adjusted to fit the target group of Generation Z, the responsible unit listed the web series “Besatzung Bravo” and an interactive lens on the platform *Snapchat* which the users could use to vote on and influence the title track and intro of the series (Referat

Arbeitgebermarke Bundeswehr 2021). Those measures were implemented explicitly to speak to the affinity for social media and the internet in general of the target group. Chapters 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 contain further analysis of the external communication and internal structures implemented to be more appealing for Generation Z.

CHAPTER 3

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

The following chapter will provide the analysis of the empirical data to answer the question of how the German Armed Forces react to the paradigm change both externally and internally. Just like in chapter 2.2.2, both ways of reaction will be divided into the three subtopics of climate change, racism/racial injustice (which in the German Armed Forces focuses on right-wing extremism), and gender equality.

3.1 THE DATASET

In order to accurately assess the ways in which the German Armed Forces react to the paradigm change in society, I analyze a variety of data ranging from legally binding documents, statements on the official website and interviews with members of the Armed Forces. In total, the dataset consists of the three regulations on traditions (“Traditionserlasse”) of the German Federal Ministry of Defense from 1965, 1982 and 2018, the “White Paper on Security Politics and the Future of the German Armed Forces”²¹ from 2016, the sustainability report of the Federal Ministry of Defense and the German Armed Forces from 2020, one podcast episode of the podcast “Funkkreis”, 14 excerpts from the official website of the German Armed Forces and 17 from the Federal Ministry of Defense, eight interviews with the forces’ members and one interview with the unit responsible for the forces’ public relations, called “Referat Arbeitgebermarke Bundeswehr”. While this dataset might seem relatively small at first sight, it provides a qualitative and intense insight into the attitudes within the German Armed Forces while still allowing for a comparison between the public and the “private” image they want to create.

The interviews with the members of the German Armed Forces were “conducted” by sending a questionnaire out to a pool of possible participants which a part of them answered in written form. The questions were posed as follows:²²

²¹ Weißbuch zur Sicherheitspolitik und zur Zukunft der Bundeswehr

²² The original questionnaire was sent out and answered in German and the questions as well as the answers were translated by the author. Whenever quotes from the answers are used, I provide both the original and a translation of question and answer.

- How long have you been in the German Armed Forces and at what age did you join?
- Has there been a noticeable change in the way soldiers treat each other in the last ~25 years/since you joined the German Armed Forces?
- Since 2000, women have been allowed to serve in the armed forces and the number of female recruits has been steadily increasing. How have you personally experienced this change?
- Last month the law for rehabilitation of homosexual soldiers was passed. How have circumstances changed for homosexual soldiers in your perception?
- With Generation Z, the understanding of gender is changing from the binary understanding of male and female to a spectral image. Do you have the impression that nonbinary people are represented/recognized in the German Armed Forces?
- According to surveys, Generation Z places a lot of value on gender equality, innovation, and flat hierarchies. Do you have the feeling that something has changed in BW in this respect?

For the respondents to be able to answer these questions freely, they asked to remain anonymous. Their identities are known to me, and to keep them anonymous, they will appear as “Member of the German Armed Forces [A-H]” with each letter clearly assigned to one respondent. In total, the respondents include two female and six male members of staff ranging from age 30 to age 60. Four of the respondents hold the rank of Captain²³, another two hold the rank of Lieutenant Colonel²⁴, one is ranked Captain Lieutenant²⁵, and one is ranked Colonel²⁶ off duty.

The questions towards the unit for public relations were asked and answered in a similar manner, and I was forwarded to a contact person in the Federal Ministry of Defense via a member of the career center of the German Armed Forces. The questions for this unit were formulated as follows:

- Has there been a noticeable change in the requirements of recruits in the last ~25 years?
- Have there been "strategy discussions" or similar on how Generation Z should be explicitly addressed as a target group?
- If so, did this exist with previous generations as well?

²³ Hauptmann

²⁴ Oberstleutnant

²⁵ Kapitänleutnant

²⁶ Oberst

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- Can you provide examples of recruitment efforts that have targeted this generation? (e.g., appearances at GamesCom, Youtube series).
- According to surveys, Generation Z places a lot of value on gender equality, innovation, and flat hierarchies. (How) do the German Armed Forces address these requirements?
- Women have been allowed to serve in the armed forces for 20 years, and the number of female recruits is on the rise. Do the German Armed Forces also specifically consider people outside the gender binary in its public relations work?

They also explicitly asked to answer the questions in written form and did not name a dedicated “spokesperson”, which is why the interview is cited with the unit as the author. While part of this questionnaire is already thematized in chapter 2.3, a huge part of the questions and answers become relevant in the following analysis. Admittedly, the questions for both groups center around the topic of gender identity because the intersectional approach, including climate change and racism/racial injustice, was added at a later point of the research. Nonetheless, almost all of the respondents did include aspects in their answers that allow for insights into the culture as a whole as well.

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I distribute the changes into two categories: external and internal changes. External changes include all kinds of statements that aim to inform the public and create a specific image of the German Armed Forces as an employer and institution. Internal changes refer to changes made that directly affect the structures of the institutions as well as subjective reactions from the soldiers.

3.2.1 EXTERNAL CHANGES

CLIMATE CHANGE

The external reaction to climate change by the German Armed Forces (or the Federal Ministry of Defense) is two-fold. One focus is less on how the way the forces operate can be adjusted to slow down climate change, but rather on the ways the equipment of the forces needs to be adapted to the changing conditions soldiers will most likely face on deployment and on how the continuing change of conditions will cause different forms of conflict and security issues. Referring to this focus, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer has mentioned the need for lighter equipment that is still able to withstand the hot temperatures and generate energy in deserted regions (Manthey 2021; Deutscher BundeswehrVerband 2021). This also includes

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investing in modern technologies that are efficient and as climate-neutral as possible (Shah 2020). These aspects were also underlined by the network “Strategy and Preview”²⁷ in its ninth meeting on the topic of climate change with former Minister of Defense Ursula von der Leyen (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2019). The most prominent example the Federal Ministry of Defense brings forward is the escalating conflict in the Sahel region. Due to rising temperatures, the region suffers from heat waves and droughts, which lead to crop failures and famines. As a consequence, farmers in Nigeria, Tchad, and Niger have started to fight about the remaining arable land violently, and terrorist groups are using the unstable situation to expand their influence in the region (Deutscher BundeswehrVerband 2021; Shah 2020).

The second focus is on what changes the German Armed Forces want to implement or have already been implemented to reduce their impact on climate change. Organizations like the German Society for the United Nations and the Federal Academy for Security Politics have publicly urged the Federal Ministry of Defense to address the Armed Forces’ role in climate change more actively and react accordingly to work towards the goals of the Paris Agreement (Reusch 2019; Deutsche Gesellschaft für die Vereinten Nationen e.V. 2020; Luhmann 2021). In 2016, the Federal Ministry of Defense published the current edition of the “White Paper on Security Politics and the Future of the German Armed Forces”²⁸, which explicitly includes climate change as a threat to national security that needs to be acknowledged and dealt with (Bundesregierung 2016: 42). Chapter 5 of the White Paper outlines the mission and tasks of the Armed Forces in the new security environment, and while it does not mention climate change explicitly, the task of protecting Germany as well as the alliance partners against current security threats implicitly includes climate change (Bundesregierung 2016: 89–93). The Federal Ministry of Defense has also repeatedly referred to the White Paper in its official statements regarding climate change (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2019; Manthey 2021). In another recent publication, a working paper written by the Federal Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of the Interior, both of them pointed out the German Climate Protection Law, which requires the reduction of emissions to a level 55 percent lower than the emission level in 1990 by 2030. In order to support reaching the goal, the ministries state that while internal combustion engines are still the most efficient way to create the performance needed for successful missions of the German Armed Forces, the Federal Police, and the

²⁷ Netzwerk „Strategie und Vorschau“

²⁸ Since the White Paper is not legally binding but represents the ideas and motivations of the government and Ministry of Defense, it falls into a grey zone between external and internal reaction. Thus, it is mentioned in both categories.

Technical Relief Organization, they want to bring change by introducing a mix of fossil fuels and synthetic fuels to the vehicles of these organizations (Redaktion der Bundeswehr 2021). The Federal Ministry of Defense specifically outlined the possibility of this approach to sustain the “continuous, fail-safe and reliable”²⁹ (ebd.) execution of tasks while complying with the legal demands of the Climate Protection Law.

The German Armed Forces published an interview that was conducted within the framework of the Munich Security Conference 2020. During the interview, Professor Bayer, who works for the German Institute For Defense And Strategic Studies, shed light on some other applications of the forces in regard to climate change, such as disaster relief. Due to their training under extreme conditions, military forces are perfectly fit to help in crises like bush fires and floods (Junge and Bayer 2020) – which are among the common “side effects” of climate change. Interestingly, he also pointed out the possible engagement of military forces in pandemic scenarios (ebd.), roughly one month before the Covid-19 pandemic hit the European continent.

Additionally, the Federal Ministry of Defense and the German Armed Forces publish a sustainability report every two years, the current one at the time of this thesis was published in 2020, and in November 2020, the German Armed Forces published an episode of their podcast “Funkkreis” outlining the contents of the report. Since the report and the podcast episode outline the internal processes and changes, these sources will be analyzed in the chapter on internal reactions to the focus on climate change. This chapter also shows that the German Armed Forces have been aware of the issue for several decades, which might explain while the external reaction does not openly relate to the success of *Fridays For Future*. This does not automatically mean that the cited publications cannot be seen as a reaction to the paradigm change in regard to climate change. Many of the sources were found by searching for “bundeswehr klimawandel pressemitteilungen”³⁰. Since *Fridays For Future* was founded three years prior to the creation of this thesis, I decided to draw a comparison by filtering the search results once from the beginning of 2015 to the beginning of and once from 2018 to July 2021. The results were telling: not only did the number in results more than double (4,040 results from 2015 to 2018 vs. 9,940 results from 2018 to July 2021), filtering the results for the three years before *Fridays For Future* was founded lead to an interesting notification from Google:

²⁹ Original wording: “kontinuierlich, ausfallsicher und zuverlässig“

³⁰ English: “German Armed Forces climate change press statements”

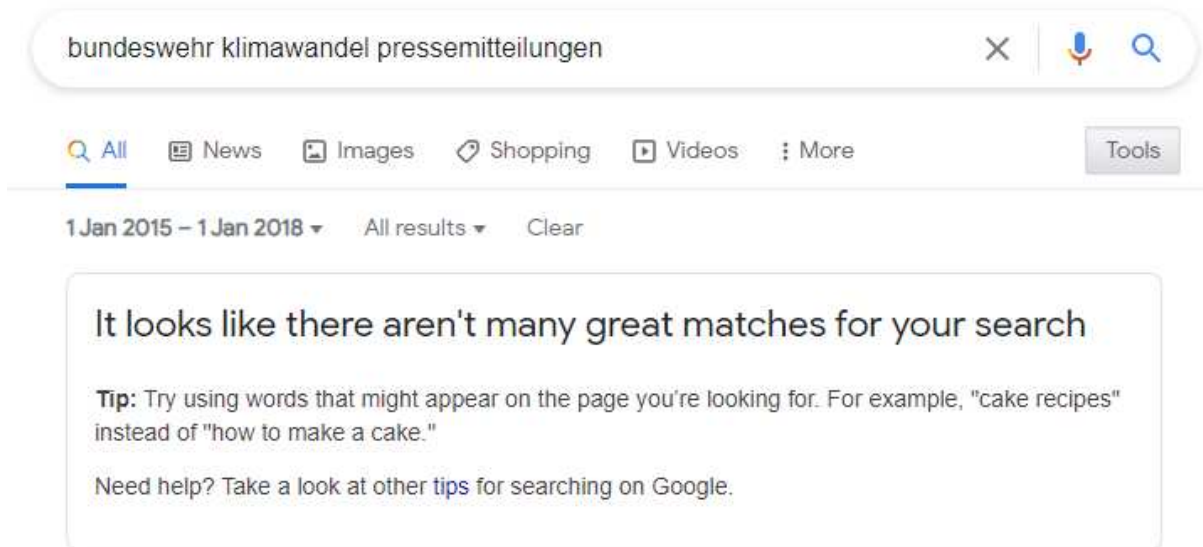


Figure 11: Google results “bundeswehr klimawandel pressemitteilungen” 2015 to 2018

Thus, while there are no “hard facts” or “hard data” on the assumption that the Federal Ministry of Defense and the German Armed Forces have shown stronger external reactions on the topic of climate change due to the paradigm change and politicization in society, the rising number of publications on the issue implies that the politicization has had an effect and the publications might have been urged by the stronger salience of the topic.

RACISM/RACIAL INJUSTICE AND RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM

As outlined in chapter 2.1.3, when looking at racism/racial injustice in the military and the German Armed Forces specifically, the focus lies on right-wing extremism. The latest reports show a rise in suspect cases, and especially the Kommando Spezialkräfte (KSK) seems to have a problem with extremism sympathizers (Naumann 2020; Peters 2012; Zeit Online 2021).

The most obvious starting point of the Federal Ministry of Defense’s external reaction to a rise of extremism cases in the German Armed Forces was the dissolution of the second division of the KSK in August 2020 (Emrich 2020; Kather 2021b). In reaction to the scandals surrounding the KSK, Minister Kramp-Karrenbauer, as well as Brigadier General Kreitmayr, the KSK’s commander, clearly stated that right-wing extremism cannot and must not be tolerated within the German Armed Forces and that the cases in the KSK were a disgrace. They introduced the working group on extremism in the KSK as well as the new Defense Commissioner of the Parliament (Fleischer 2020a). In June 2020, the minister came to the forces’ defense and pleaded for support from the public and policy-makers, stating that the

majority of the people employed at the German Armed Forces do hold the values of the constitution and support the state in crises like the Covid-19 pandemic (Fleischer 2020b). Shortly after, Kramp-Karrenbauer and the Inspector-General of the German Armed Forces gave another public statement, stressing the damage the extremism cases in the KSK have done to the public's trust in the Armed Forces. They repeatedly mentioned the planned reforms of the KSK (which are analyzed in the chapter on external reactions) and how they will sweep the command with an "iron broom"³¹ to clean it from all extremist remains (Fleischer 2020c). In this statement, they also included an example of a member of the Military Counterintelligence Service³² who was suspended after they illegally shared information with third parties, broadening the focus away from the KSK. In September 2020, Kramp-Karrenbauer participated in a roundtable with sponsors of the Network for Political Education for the German Armed Forces³³. During the event, she once again clearly underlined her (and thus the ministry's) stance on the issue:

"I stand for a zero-tolerance line: there is no place for extremists in the German Armed Forces! At the same time, I ask myself how we can prevent extremist ideas and prevent radicalization in the force."³⁴ (Fleischer 2020d)

In 2021 finally, the Federal Ministry of Defense published a summary of the report by the Coordination Office for Suspected Extremism Cases which I discussed in chapter 2.3.1. The publication includes a quote from the report highlighting the rise in awareness for extremism cases shown in the rise of reports by other soldiers. Further, it extends the focus from right-wing extremism to "all forms of extremism" which are not tolerated in the German Armed Forces (Rödel 2021).

On their website, the German Armed Forces created a page summarizing the public information available about extremism in all forms within the forces. They stress the importance of prevention and political education to prevent extremists from even entering the forces, and in the case of prevention failing, the need to react decisively (Bundeswehr 2021e). The page also includes detailed information about the definition and dangers of extremism, the number of cases within the German Armed Forces, and the measures they implement to take

³¹ Original wording: "eiserner Besen"

³² Militärischer Abschirmdienst (MAD)

³³ Netzwerk politische Bildung für die Bundeswehr

³⁴ Original quote: "Ich stehe für eine Null-Toleranz-Linie: Für Extremisten ist in der Bundeswehr kein Platz! Gleichzeitig frage ich mich, wie wir extremistischem Gedankengut vorbeugen und eine Radikalisierung in der Truppe verhindern können."

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action against the existing problem. Along with the precise title of the page “Committed to the constitution: No place for extremists”³⁵, the German Armed Forces also put a very unambiguous quote from the first report of the Coordination Office for Suspected Extremism Cases of the German Federal Ministry of Defense:

“Extremism has no place in the German Armed Forces. The Armed Forces’ claim and goal is to remove and keep away both recognized extremists and persons who are not loyal to the constitution.”³⁶ (Koordinierungsstelle für Extremismusverdachtsfälle BMVg 2019: 3)

The same quote has also been used as an excerpt of the report on the website of the Federal Ministry of Defense (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2020b). The extension to “persons who are not loyal to the constitution” allows for the so-called “Reichsbürger” movement to also be expelled from the forces while still making a differentiation to extremists.

Just like with the publications on climate change, it is not apparent that these positionings against right-wing extremism are a direct external reaction to the politicization of the matter. As I have outlined in chapter 2.2.2, the attack in Hanau has led to a strong mobilization, especially among younger people that demand the political elite to take a more assertive and more decisive stance against the threat of right-wing extremism. Newspaper and journal reports about extremists in the German Armed Forces have been around for at least a decade (Birnbaum 2010; Dewitz 2015; Engelhardt 2016). The most popular case of extremism in the forces was the case of “Franco A.”: he was a soldier who took on a second identity as a Syrian refugee and planned on committing acts of terrorism under his second identity to harm the image of refugees in Germany. It was brought to court in 2017 (Frankfurter Rundschau 2017), and the trial started in May 2021 (Kisters 2021). This shows that the timing of this immense number of public statements and press conferences in 2020 and 2021 cannot be caused by the problem being a new one. Just like with the topic of climate change, I argue that while there are no official statements linking the external reaction to (in this case) the Hanau demonstrations and demands, the timing aligns very well and can be seen as an implication of the influence of the societal politicization in this regard as well.

³⁵ Original wording: “Der Verfassung verpflichtet: Kein Platz für Extremisten”

³⁶ Original quote: “Extremismus hat in der Bundeswehr keinen Platz. Anspruch und Ziel der Bundeswehr ist es, sowohl erkannte Extremisten als auch Personen mit fehlender Verfassungstreue aus der Bundeswehr zu entfernen und von ihr fernzuhalten.”

GENDER EQUALITY

As mentioned before, the term “gender equality” does not only refer to the equality between men and women but the equal treatment of nonbinary genders and sexualities other than heterosexual as well. First, I take a look at the external changes in regard to the gender aspect before examining external changes in relation to sexuality in the German Armed Forces.

When it comes to equality of all genders, the German Armed Forces either focus on women or mention transgender³⁷ people in the same context as homosexual people. Nonbinary identities are not mentioned explicitly. On the page about “Diversity in the German Armed Forces”, they stress the advantages of having a diverse staff and explicitly mention that diversity does make the forces more attractive as an employer these days (Bundeswehr 2021f). The German Armed Forces provide a very complex array of data on the ranks of women in the forces and their distribution in the different areas, stating that one fifth of applications for the voluntary military service and one third of applications for the officer’s career path is sent by young women (Bundeswehr 2021d). Additionally, they also put an emphasis on the difficulty of overcoming internalized and subconscious biases and how those are also still existing within the forces (Bundeswehr 2021c; Wilk 2021). Consequently, most pages of the website of the German Armed Forces now include photos of women in diverse situations or as a centerpiece of the website – also in contexts in which female representation does not mirror reality. On the information page, dated November 19th, 2019, about the application process for the KSK, the Armed Forces advertise the job as a command officer³⁸ or command sergeant³⁹. The only picture they used showed a young woman in uniform securing the landing zone for the command forces. While the webpage clearly contained information on how to apply to command level positions, the description below the picture stated she is a reconnaissance sergeant⁴⁰, thus taking on a support role for the command forces. Interestingly, this page has been deleted and has not been replaced as of July 5th, 2021.⁴¹

³⁷ On their website, the German Armed Forces still use the term “transsexuell” (transsexual). Since being trans refers to a gender identity and not a sexual orientation, the term “transgender/trans” is more common and accepted these days and will be used in this thesis even when referring to the contents of the website.

³⁸ Kommandooffizier

³⁹ Kommandofeldwebel

⁴⁰ Aufklärungsfeldwebel

⁴¹ The deleted content (dated March 2021) can be accessed via <https://web.archive.org/web/20210305144841/https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/bewerben-beim-ksk-147158>.

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Das Kommando Spezialkräfte (KSK) bietet eine der interessantesten und vielseitigsten Verwendungen der Bundeswehr. Die Tätigkeit als Kommandooffizier oder **Kommandofeldwebel** ist fordernd und einzigartig.



Ein **Aufklärungsfeldwebel** der Spezialkräfte sichert die Landezone für die eigenen Kräfte.

© Bundeswehr/Kommando Spezialkräfte

Figure 12: Screenshot of the KSK application information webpage⁴² (Bundeswehr 2019)

It seems like the German Armed Forces wanted to make the KSK more attractive to women and highlight their engagement in the special forces, and for most people without some knowledge about the ranks and different areas of the German Armed Forces, the display of a reconnaissance sergeant instead of a command sergeant would probably not make a notable difference. The reason they did not use a picture of a female command sergeant for advertising for the KSK is simple: there are none. While there are no laws preventing women from entering the special force like for example, in Israel, there so far has not been a woman that passed the demanding test that requires the same results from both women and men to pass. In 2021, two years after the now-deleted page was published, a woman managed to pass the first round of tests to become part of the KSK (Deutscher BundeswehrVerband and Hoffmann 2021). The page has been deleted without leaving a comment about the reason for this action.

The Federal Ministry of Defense has been officially supporting the stronger inclusion of women in the German Armed Forces for several years. A study from 2011 showed that ten

⁴² Highlights by the author.

years ago, the number of men that did not believe women could fulfill the physically demanding functions of the job was higher than the number of male soldiers stating the same in 2005 (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2014). In consequence, the ministry kept actively pushing for women in higher ranks of the Armed Forces. Former Minister of Defense von der Leyen primarily focused on breaking down barriers for women looking to climb the career ladder (Jarowsinsky and Beckh 2019). Her successor Kramp-Karrenbauer continued these efforts. Continuous reports show that the promotion of women in the German Armed Forces is successful (Kather 2020), but the goal of the ministry has apparently not been met yet. At this year's annual conference of the "Initiative Chefsache"⁴³, Minister Kramp-Karrenbauer stressed the effect the Covid-19 pandemic had on the distribution of labor and hence the careers of women: most of the emotional labor of organizing a household and supporting children with homeschooling fell on women (Jarowsinsky 2021). Within the German Armed Forces, this comes to the fact that due to women only being allowed to work in all branches since 2001, none of them were able to complete the career steps necessary to rise to the highest ranks, and the progress of many got stumped in the pandemic. Kramp-Karrenbauer publicly admitted that there is still a need within the forces to support women adequately, stating:

"These are important steps forward, but they are not yet enough. Because part of the reality is that we are still fighting against conscious and - this is perhaps even more difficult - unconscious prejudices in hiring, appraisals and promotions."⁴⁴ (ebd.)

The analysis of the internal changes further outlines which measures are being taken to ensure the support of female soldiers and how the forces react to them.

In regard to the inclusion of LGBTQIA soldiers, the focus mainly lies in the rehabilitation of homosexual male soldiers. The contact section on the bottom of the official website of the German Armed Forces includes a direct link to the page containing information about the history and legal situation as well as possible steps victims of discrimination can take to be rehabilitated. The information page openly states that it took public pressure for the German Armed Forces to change their restrictive policies to match societal change (Kather 2021a). Besides that, most publications refer to the study of the *Center for Military History and Social Sciences of the Bundeswehr*⁴⁵ or the extensive work of Dr. Klaus Storkmann about that topic.

⁴³ Rough translation: "Initiative Chief Matter"

⁴⁴ Original quote: "Das sind wichtige Schritte nach vorne, aber sie reichen noch nicht aus. Denn zur Realität gehört, dass wir immer noch gegen bewusste und – das ist vielleicht noch schwieriger – unbewusste Vorurteile bei Einstellungen, Beurteilungen und Beförderungen kämpfen."

⁴⁵ Zentrum für Militärgeschichte und Sozialwissenschaften der Bundeswehr

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He has repeatedly published information about the history of homosexual soldiers in the German Armed Forces, for example, in journal articles (Storkmann 2018) or as comprehensive studies in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Defense (Storkmann 2021). The content mainly summarizes the studies' findings and gives an overview of the history of homosexuality in the German Armed Forces, which I already briefly discussed in chapter 2.1.3. In the context of a series called "65 years of German Armed Forces"⁴⁶, they published an interview with Lieutenant Colonel Anastasia Biefang, who is the first transgender commander of the German Armed Forces. Two of the five questions she was asked refer to her gender identity and the media attention she got because of this. Biefang herself states that she hopes her being "out and proud" in uniform will pave the way for others in similar situations (Wanninger 2021). She is also the Vice-Chair of the Working Group of Homosexual Members of the German Armed Forces⁴⁷, which is now known as *QueerBW*. The association was founded in 2002 to represent the interests of LGBTQIA members of the forces (QueerBW 2021).

The Federal Ministry of Defense publicly acknowledges the damage done by Section 175 of the German Criminal Code. In 2017, the ministry organized a workshop about sexual orientation and identity in the German Armed Forces to raise awareness for the discrimination members of the LGBTQIA-community still face and to shed light on ways how unconscious and conscious bias can be overcome (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2021). In a meeting with *QueerBW*, Kramp-Karrenbauer stressed that "[t]oday, it is not a matter of merely tolerating sexual orientations or identities" (Rödel 2020), referring to the need to actively include non-heterosexual members of the forces and work against discrimination. As mentioned above in chapter 2.1.4, the law to rehabilitate homosexual soldiers who faced discrimination because of their sexuality was passed (Gantenbein 2021; Schmid 2021). In order to openly show support for female soldiers and members of the LGBTQIA-community, the German Armed Forces also publish tailored campaigns on occasions like Equal Pay Day, German Diversity Day, or Christopher Street Day (Referat Arbeitgebermarke Bundeswehr 2021).

While the inclusion of women did not happen voluntarily initially and took a court decision, the German Armed Forces and the Federal Ministry of Defense now actively push for more inclusion of women, especially in higher ranks. Unlike the inclusion of LGBTQIA soldiers, which was openly linked to pressure and change in society, none of the institutions stated the

⁴⁶ Original wording: "65 Jahre Bundeswehr"

⁴⁷ Arbeitskreis Homosexueller Angehöriger der Bundeswehr e.V.

same in regard to women. The publications about Biefang and active efforts to work on the integration of trans identities in the forces as well as the recently passed law on the rehabilitation of homosexual soldiers is a sign that the German Armed Forces and the Federal Ministry of Defense are aware of the salience of the topic of gender equality. Non-binary genders are not mentioned besides the “male/female/diverse” note on job postings which are mandatory since 2019 (Körlings 2018: 283–284; Schlachter 2021: 6).

INTERIM CONCLUSION

The externally communicated changes in the areas of climate change, racism/racial injustice and right-wing extremism, and gender equality paint the picture of the Federal Ministry of Defense and the German Armed Forces being aware of the salience of the topics at hand. Be it the rise in publications on climate change measures, the strict condemnation of extremists in the Armed Forces, or the rehabilitation of and cooperation with homosexual members of the forces; it becomes apparent that the institutions are aiming to openly show that they are taking the issues seriously and are working in accordance with the values represented by Generation Z. The changes are happening simultaneously with or shortly after politicized debates and protests lead by the younger generations. The Federal Ministry of Defense and the German Armed Forces thus externally react to politicized paradigm changes by adapting their policies and communication to fit and represent these changes. The answers to the interview questions given by the public relations unit support the assumption that politicization and a change in values cause the German Armed Forces to adapt:

“However, most of the improvements in the world of work [flexible work, home office etc.] that have been highlighted did not exist 25 years ago. Only societal change, technological progress (digitalization, globalization), political will and the introduction of legal (and service) obligations for employers made this possible.”⁴⁸ (Referat Arbeitgebermarke Bundeswehr 2021)

While this statement does not relate directly to the influence of politicization and societal change on the external presentation of the institutions, the conclusion that these factors do also influence external communication seems obvious.

⁴⁸ Original quote: “Die meisten der aufgezeigten Verbesserungen in der Arbeitswelt [flexible Arbeitsbedingungen, Homeoffice etc.] bestanden allerdings vor 25 Jahren noch nicht. Erst gesellschaftlicher Wandel, technischer Fortschritt (Digitalisierung, Globalisierung), politischer Wille und die Einführung gesetzlicher (und dienstlicher) Verpflichtungen für die Arbeitgeber machten dies möglich.“

3.2.2 INTERNAL CHANGES

CLIMATE CHANGE

Internally, the German Armed Forces have been actively integrating environmental protection in their policies for years. In an episode of the official podcast “Funkkreis” about the successes of climate and environment protection measures, they revealed that the forces have been employing Environmental Protection Officers for 50 years (Gantenbein *et al.* 2020: 00:25). Their focus lies mainly on the reduction of carbon dioxide, which they achieve by investing in renewable energies and renovation of the old buildings of the barracks (Gantenbein *et al.* 2020: 08:30-10:55). The efforts are successful: 65 percent of the energy used comes from renewable sources, and compared to 1990, the carbon dioxide production was reduced by 80 percent (Gantenbein *et al.* 2020: 10:45-11:29). In addition, the German Armed Forces created a renovation program called “Pump and Treat”, which allows them to clean contaminated groundwater and redirect it into the water cycle (Gantenbein *et al.* 2020: 18:00-20:27). In their cooperation with companies, they introduced a pilot project, demanding their suppliers of basic necessities (required in large quantities, like bed linen) to show environmental labels proving their efforts to protect the ecosystem (Gantenbein *et al.* 2020: 16:00-16:44). Finally, the seclusion of the training grounds makes for an excellent natural habitat for flora and fauna, and out of the 228,000 hectares of land, more than half counts as a nature reserve and is a crucial part of the European environmental program “Natura 2000” (Gantenbein *et al.* 2020: 21:30-22:27).

Biannually, the Federal Ministry of Defense publishes a sustainability report on the measures and goals for the ministry and Armed Forces. The current report is structured in 13 chapters covering different aspects of the sustainability approach of the Federal Ministry of Defense as well as goals and plans in the area of gender equality and education. For this subsection, chapter four on climate protection, chapter five on environmental protection and nature conservation, chapter seven on electricity and thermal energy consumption, chapter eight on sustainable mobility, and chapter nine on sustainable public procurement hold the internal changes in regard to climate change. All chapters of the report reference the goals of the United Nations’ Agenda 2030 (United Nations General Assembly 2015: 14) to whose completion the listed measures contribute. Chapter four starts with acknowledging the rising importance of climate protection in society:

“In recent years, climate protection has nationally and internationally been one of the defining issues in politics, society and the economy. The Federal Ministry of Defense and the German Armed Forces are also facing the associated challenges.”⁴⁹
(Bundesministerium der Verteidigung and Bundeswehr 2020: 13)

In 2019, the Federal Ministry of Defense set the goal to become fully climate-neutral by 2023, while the Climate Protection Law commands climate neutrality of the Federal Administration by 2030 and the state’s climate neutrality by 2050. In order to reach this goal, the ministry applies the approach of “determine, avoid, reduce, compensate” to identify sources of carbon dioxide production and implement measures to eliminate and replace them (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung and Bundeswehr 2020: 14–15). Chapter five outlines the introduction of internal service regulations regarding climate change in 2015 and the development of an environmental management system that assigns goals and targets to the different areas of climate protection (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung and Bundeswehr 2020: 16). Besides that, it mainly focuses on the value of the training fields as natural reserves, which was also outlined in the podcast episode discussed above. Chapter seven underlines the statements made in the podcast about the progress when it comes to the implementation of renewable energies. While the energy consumption per capita has been constant from 2015 to 2019, the share of renewable energy sources in heat supply almost doubled in the same timeframe (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung and Bundeswehr 2020: 22–25). Chapter eight reiterates the progress in the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions from military mobility systems on land, air and sea and vehicles (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung and Bundeswehr 2020: 27–30), and chapter nine outlines the efforts to use sustainable materials and set standards for public procurement (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung and Bundeswehr 2020: 31–32).

Additionally, there seem to be smaller and less noticeable changes in the mindset of the soldiers. In my contact with some members of the German Armed Forces, I noticed that one of them had put the notice “Please consider the environment before printing this email.” below his mail signature. Since none of the other members I exchanged emails with had this note in their mails, it seems voluntary to do so. Both the podcast and the sustainability report show that the German Armed Forces and the Federal Ministry of Defense have been aware of the issue

⁴⁹ Original quote: “Der Klimaschutz war in den vergangenen Jahren national und international eines der bestimmenden Themen in Politik, Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft. Auch das Bundesministerium der Verteidigung und die Bundeswehr stellen sich den damit verbundenen Herausforderungen.”

long before *Fridays For Future* was founded, so most of their internal changes cannot be interpreted as directly caused by the politicization by Generation Z. However, they acknowledge the salience of the topic of climate change for society and thus themselves – the politicization can and probably does therefore have an influence on the prioritization of the topic within the forces.

RACISM/RACIAL INJUSTICE AND RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM

The section on external changes already mentions various measures the Federal Ministry of Defense wants to implement or has already implemented to tackle the problem of right-wing extremism in the German Armed Forces. Both reports on suspected extremism cases outline the measures within the forces. In the first report, they are distributed in the instruments and efforts of the forces, those of the human resources management, and those of the Military Counterintelligence Service. In 2019, countermeasures within the forces mainly focused on leadership content. People in leadership positions were trained to convey information regarding the intercultural interaction with each other as well as about extremism in general and thus are expected to take on a vital role in the value transfer to new generations of soldiers (Koordinierungsstelle für Extremismusverdachtsfälle BMVg 2019: 15–16). In suspected cases of extremism, leadership has to initiate disciplinary action, which can be taken on the basis of Section 8 of the Law of the Legal Status of Soldiers⁵⁰ – in 2019, five cases of judicial disciplinary action and 13 cases of simple disciplinary action were closed (Koordinierungsstelle für Extremismusverdachtsfälle BMVg 2019: 17). The human resources management's main preventive instrument is the soldier recruitment review⁵¹: before recruits get trained with weapons, they need to pass a simple security check. In 2019, 25 recruits were not admitted to training due to safety concerns, 22 of them due to reference to extremism (Koordinierungsstelle für Extremismusverdachtsfälle BMVg 2019: 18). To help with the work on extremism cases, the Federal Ministry of Defense published a “working aid” for extremism, including tools and procedures to help efficiently tackle extremism cases.

Additionally, the human resources management has several repressive instruments for taking action against extremism cases such as warnings, termination of suitability exercises, or discharge. 49 people were discharged because of “extremist misconduct” in 2019, 46 cases were related to right-wing extremism, one to left-wing extremism, and two to religion-based extremism (ebd.). The Military Counterintelligence Service primarily assumes an advisory role

⁵⁰ Gesetz über die Rechtsstellung der Soldaten (Soldatengesetz)

⁵¹ Soldateneinstellungsüberprüfung

for responsible parties and uses the whole spectrum of intelligence measures such as observations or covert investigations (Koordinierungsstelle für Extremismusverdachtsfälle BMVg 2019: 19). It was separated from the German Armed Forces to be directly subordinated to the Federal Ministry of Defense as well as restructured to have a leadership in which both vice presidents have not worked inside the Military Counterintelligence Service before. A more robust mix of civilian and military personnel is thought to help include unbiased viewpoints in the organization (Koordinierungsstelle für Extremismusverdachtsfälle BMVg 2019: 20). Since October 2019, the intelligence service has had its own counter-extremism department, which not only focuses on extremists but also investigates extremist aspirations (ebd.).

The section on measures outlined in the second report on suspected extremism cases follows a similar structure, showing personnel management measures, measures implemented in and by the Military Counterintelligence Service, and a separate section on the KSK. In 2020, the human resource management rejected 71 applicants during the assessment before the soldier recruitment review due to “doubts about fidelity to the constitution”⁵², and another 38 were rejected or discharged due to safety concerns, 34 of those with references to extremism (Koordinierungsstelle für Extremismusverdachtsfälle BMVg 2020: 25–26). Further, 35 soldiers were discharged due to reference to right-wing extremism. The legal framework to dismiss members of the forces without notice used to allow this for the first four years of service, and in 2020, a law was passed to allow these dismissals in the first eight years of service (Koordinierungsstelle für Extremismusverdachtsfälle BMVg 2020: 27). When it comes to disciplinary actions, the German Armed Forces have decided to revise the working aid on extremism published in 2019, as well as the implementation of an expert group to help with the reformation of the Military Service Law⁵³. Furthermore, they created four more judicial chambers to be able to manage the high number of disciplinary cases (Koordinierungsstelle für Extremismusverdachtsfälle BMVg 2020: 30). The importance of the security check remains prevalent, but it has become apparent that the simple security check leaves gaps and needs to be conducted in shorter intervals. For this reason, the parliament decided to lay the groundwork to allow for use-related safety inspections of soldiers (Koordinierungsstelle für Extremismusverdachtsfälle BMVg 2020: 31). The Military Counterintelligence Service focused mainly on reservists instead of active soldiers and processed 313 cases, of which 275 were linked to right-wing extremism and another 26 to the “Reichsbürger” movement

⁵² Original wording: “Zweifel an der Verfassungstreue”

⁵³ Wehrdienstrecht

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(Koordinierungsstelle für Extremismusverdachtsfälle BMVg 2020: 33). In reaction to that, the parliament has initiated a law that enables the simple security check to be conducted on reservists as well (Koordinierungsstelle für Extremismusverdachtsfälle BMVg 2020: 34). The measures to reform the leadership education introduced in 2019 remain active to ensure a preventive approach to avoid extremists in the ranks of the German Armed Forces (Koordinierungsstelle für Extremismusverdachtsfälle BMVg 2020: 36–38).

Another indication for internal changes in regard to right-wing extremism is the revision of the regulations on traditions of the German Armed Forces. In 2018, the Federal Ministry of Defense published the third version of these regulations, which are the guidelines for the understanding of tradition in the German Armed Forces. As a service regulation, they are legally binding for them. In order to fully understand the scope of changes that were made in the current version, one needs to take a look at the content of the former two versions as well. The first regulations on traditions were published on July 1st, 1965 – ten years after the German Armed Forces were founded – and aimed to define values worth passing on from Germany’s military history. It stressed the importance of acknowledging past efforts and successes to preserve tradition while simultaneously staying open-minded for new practices that might be considered tradition one day (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 1965: Nr. 8). The resistance fighters of the Wehrmacht and their ability to reflect orders and value freedom were seen as particularly memorable and as examples of what members of the German Armed Forces should strive to be (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 1965: Nr. 14). The first version also started defining the memorabilia and symbols of the traditions of the German Armed Forces, namely the black, red, and gold flag of Germany and the national anthem, which represent the search for unity, right, and freedom⁵⁴, the German Eagle as the oldest symbol of sovereignty and the Iron Cross as a symbol for the bravery of the soldiers (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 1965: Nr. 20).

The second version of the regulations on traditions was published on September 1st, 1982, as a reaction to two major political events in Germany: the first one was the so-called “Rudel-Affair” in 1976. Hans-Ulrich Rudel was the second-highest awarded soldier and Colonel in the Wehrmacht during the Third Reich and continued supporting right-wing extremists after the end of the Second World War. In October 1976, he was invited to speak at the traditional meeting of former members of the Schlachtgeschwader 2 “Immelmann”, a German Air Force

⁵⁴ The German translation “Einigkeit, Recht und Freiheit” is also the first line of the national anthem of the Federal Republic of Germany.

dive bomber wing in World War II. Public attempts to justify the invitation despite Rudel's past by referring to Herbert Wehner's past in the Communist Party never being an issue ended in the two high-ranking officers who invited Rudel and the Parliamentary State Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Defense who approved the traditional meeting, being discharged (Schilling 2020: 57–98). The second event that urged the revision of the regulations was the ongoing societal liberalization and politicization led by the protests of 1968 (Dörr and Grawe 2021) – a movement of similar global dimension and impact as the demonstrations led by Generation Z. This version highlighted the importance to include the whole German history and be aware of the role of the soldiers in the Third Reich which “were partly culpably involved, partly they were abused innocently”⁵⁵ (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 1982: Nr. 5-6). Among the most important attitudes of a soldier, the regulations list critical commitment to the history of the German military, political responsibility, democratic value awareness, and conscientious obedience (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 1982: Nr. 17), and it includes an explicit dissociation from memorabilia from the Third Reich (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 1982: Nr. 22). The second version expanded the list of memorabilia by the oath of service, the “Grand Tattoo”⁵⁶ as a symbol of solidarity, and the song “Ich hatt’ einen Kameraden”⁵⁷ as a farewell (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 1982: Nr. 23).

Similar to the second revision, the third and current version of the regulations on traditions of the German Armed Forces was created in reaction to a political scandal surrounding a right-wing extremist soldier – the aforementioned case of Franco A. The following debate about right-wing extremism in the German Armed Forces led to the Federal Ministry of Defense revising the regulations on traditions and providing a modern interpretation of the military history of Germany (Dörr and Grawe 2021). The intensity with which the confrontation with the past understanding of tradition was conducted can be seen in the length of the regulations; the version of 2018 comprises twice as many pages as the earlier versions. The tenets of the current regulations include a critical and present-oriented understanding of traditions while acknowledging their importance for the self-perception of the forces (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2018: Nr. 1). The historical background of the German Armed Forces is subjected to a differentiated examination: The military forces prior to 1918 are seen as memorable since

⁵⁵ Original quote: “[...] waren [Streitkräfte] teils schuldhaft verstrickt, teils wurden sie schuldlos missbraucht“

⁵⁶ “Großer Zapfenstreich“, a military ceremony performed in Germany and Austria during national celebrations.

⁵⁷ The title roughly translates to “I used to have a comrade”. The song is performed at military obsequies and on Remembrance Day.

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many of the procedures and structures of the German Armed Forces today have their roots in the structures of that time (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2018: Nr. 2.2). The forces of the Weimar Republic, which later evolved into the Wehrmacht, are explicitly not a source of tradition due to their anti-republican attitude. Unlike the second revision, the current version of the regulation does not excuse the role of the Wehrmacht during the Nazi regime and only talks about the culpable involvement during the war (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2018: Nr. 2.3). The National People's Army of the GDR is not condemned fully since it did not stop the people's fight for freedom during the peaceful protests in 1989, and some members became part of the German Armed Forces to help with the German reunification (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2018: Nr. 2.4.1). Another new distinction is made in the understanding of historical actions and figures. While single members of the Wehrmacht and the National People's Army can become part of the military traditions as exceptions (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2018: Nr. 3.4.1-3.4.2), the characters and actions need to be interpreted by today's understanding of racist or inhuman behavior (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2018: Nr. 3.4) which also excludes parts of the military resistance in the Wehrmacht. Factors like historical education and regional references are important conditions for adequately maintaining traditions in a federal state (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2018: Nr. 4.1-4.5). In the current regulations on traditions of the German Armed Forces, the flag and the anthem of the European Union were added to the list of memorabilia as a sign of commitment to the European Defense Identity (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2018: Nr. 4.6). Another impactful step decided in the regulations is the designation of military properties. The names given to the barracks need to be of people who comply with the requirements in the regulations on traditions (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2018: Nr. 4.15). This has already led to name changes of barracks to fulfill the specifications, also in cases where the knowledge about the background of the former namesake was too incomplete to justify the maintaining of the name (Hilscher 2021).

The first and second versions of the regulations on traditions of the German Armed Forces were written in response to a change in the political climate of Germany and the world, both times connected to an urge to gain distance from the right-wing extremist ideology of the Nazi regime and to work towards a more liberal society. The regulations of 1982 were also influenced by the politicization of the movement of 1968, which shows strong similarities to the global protest movements of the 21st century. It is thus not far-fetched to assume an influence of the worldwide anti-racism movements to have influenced changes like the current

regulations on traditions or the measures implemented to fight right-wing extremism within the forces and the KSK in particular. While this fight has obviously always been of importance for the German Armed Forces and forced them to continue re-evaluating the existing rules and structures in place, notable changes always came about in times of societal politicization on the matter. Whether the current measures and rules in place will have a lasting effect and lower the number of extremism cases in the German Armed Forces, in the long run, will be observable in the years to come.

GENDER EQUALITY

The changes in the area of gender equality are strongly dependent on subjective perception since while the Federal Ministry of Defense and the German Armed Forces can implement changes in the structure, discrimination within the forces based on gender identity and sexual orientation might still prevail. In 2015, the staff element “Equal Opportunities”⁵⁸ was founded within the Federal Ministry of Defense to help with eliminating systemic disadvantages for female soldiers and employees and strengthen the sensitization of leadership personnel about equal opportunities and needed changes in leadership style to achieve it. The staff element’s responsibilities also include staff retention and the promotion of women in the forces. In 2016, the topics diversity and inclusion were added to the list of duties (Referat Arbeitgebermarke Bundeswehr 2021). Additionally, the German Armed Forces have employed an Equal Opportunities Officer for civilian matters and one for military personnel (ebd.).

The questions answered by the eight members of the German Armed Forces provide an insight into how well the measures implemented for more gender equality between men and women work. Concerning the inclusion of women in the German Armed Forces, some respondents interestingly answered both the question “Has there been a noticeable change in the way soldiers treat each other in the last ~25 years/since you joined the German Armed Forces?”⁵⁹ and the following question “Since 2000, women have been allowed to serve in the armed forces, and the number of female recruits has been steadily increasing. How have you personally experienced this change?”⁶⁰ referencing changes caused by the inclusion of women. According to one respondent, the conversational tone has become softer since women have joined all branches of the forces (Member of the German Armed Forces F 2021). Another

⁵⁸ Stabselement Chancengleichheit

⁵⁹ Original wording: “Gab es eine spürbare Veränderung im Umgang der Soldat*innen miteinander in den letzten ~25 Jahren/seit Sie Teil der BW sind?”

⁶⁰ Original wording: “Seit 2000 dürfen Frauen Dienst an der Waffe leisten und die Zahl der Rekrutinnen steigt stetig. Wie haben Sie diese Veränderung persönlich erlebt?”

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respondent, a female captain and member of the younger Generation Y, described the same phenomenon as the soldiers becoming “effeminate”⁶¹. The same respondent also stated that while it is basically worth supporting to have women be able to work with weapons, they should only work in the fighting forces as exceptions and not the rule (Member of the German Armed Forces E 2021). The inclusion of women seems not to have gone over smoothly as well. Several respondents noted that, especially at the beginning of the inclusion process, men apparently were often treated unfairly compared to women and had to take a back seat when it came to conflicts or promotions (Member of the German Armed Forces C 2021; Member of the German Armed Forces G 2021). The way in which the inclusion was pushed was also criticized since one respondent felt like the process got too much attention and was therefore treated as something special when it should not have been extraordinary, and it was criticized how married men and fathers had to attend workshops on how to deal with women. In short, people were making mountains out of molehills⁶² (Member of the German Armed Forces B 2021). Both female respondents also felt the need to stress that they support the inclusion of women as long as they do not get treated better (or worse) than their male counterparts (Member of the German Armed Forces A 2021; Member of the German Armed Forces E 2021). Interestingly, two male respondents mentioned that they have experienced and still experience discrimination against women in the German Armed Forces and how male comrades do not trust them with the assigned tasks (Member of the German Armed Forces C 2021; Member of the German Armed Forces F 2021). Others perceived the change more positively. One respondent who works as an instructor for younger recruits explicitly mentioned his positive experience with female recruits:

“On the whole [the experience was] positive, there are good and bad ones everywhere, regardless of gender. Women are generally more ambitious and meticulous in achieving their goals. In my trainings since 2010, no woman has ever failed (with a participation rate of approx. 10 - 15 %).”⁶³ (Member of the German Armed Forces D 2021).

For another respondent, putting women in certain positions (which were not specified) that they were not able to fill before was a favorable decision as well, and former experiences with

⁶¹ Original quote: “Generell: Verweichlichung der Soldat*innen”.

⁶² Original quote: “Das klassische aus einer Mücke einen Elefanten machen.”

⁶³ Original quote: “In der Gesamtbetrachtung [war die Erfahrung] positiv, es gibt überall Gute und Schlechte, gleichgültig welchen Geschlechts. Frauen sind im allgemeinen ehrgeiziger und akribischer in der Zielerreichung. In meinen Trainings seit 2010 ist bisher noch keine Frau durchgefallen (bei einer Teilnahmequote von ca. 10 - 15 %).”

women in foreign armed forces made the transition easier (Member of the German Armed Forces C 2021; Member of the German Armed Forces H 2021). All in all, it was perceived as a bumpy road that has since been smoothed out, and besides some “traditionalists” in all age groups and of all genders, most of the German Armed Forces accept and embrace the cooperation with female soldiers.

Another question aimed at the experiences the respondents had with homosexual (male) soldiers and how the conditions and treatment they are met with have perceivably changed within the German Armed Forces.⁶⁴ The answers were just as mixed as those about the changes following the inclusion of women. Almost half of the respondents said that they feel like the forces have become more tolerant towards homosexual soldiers and that sexuality does not play as much of a role anymore as it did 25 years ago (Member of the German Armed Forces A 2021; Member of the German Armed Forces B 2021; Member of the German Armed Forces E 2021). One of them worded it as the German Armed Forces “having finally grown up in this point”⁶⁵ (Member of the German Armed Forces A 2021). Others were very curt in their responses and plainly stated that they do not feel like the situation has changed at all for homosexual soldiers (Member of the German Armed Forces F 2021; Member of the German Armed Forces G 2021) or that they could not answer the question since they do not know any openly homosexual soldier but assume that most of them do not come out of the closet out of fear of exclusion⁶⁶ (Member of the German Armed Forces D 2021). The remaining two referred to stories of homosexual comrades who faced discrimination due to their sexuality back in the 1990s. One of the cases was that of a young officer that kept asking for transfers so that no one would find out he is homosexual, which resulted in him contracting aids. According to this respondent, this case led to a lot of sensitization for the struggles of homosexual comrades within the forces (Member of the German Armed Forces C 2021). The other story referred to a comrade of the respondent committing suicide because of his fear that his sexuality might lessen his career chances. In the same response, this member of the forces also stated that he did not really care for the topic of homosexuality within the German Armed Forces (Member of the German Armed Forces H 2021).

⁶⁴ Original question: “Letzten Monat wurde das Gesetz für die Rehabilitierung homosexueller Soldaten verabschiedet. Wie haben sich die Umstände für homosexuelle Soldaten in Ihrer Wahrnehmung verändert?”

⁶⁵ Original quote: “M.E. ist die Bundeswehr in diesem Punkt endlich erwachsen geworden.”

⁶⁶ Original quote: “keine Angabe möglich, kenne keinen...das Outing ist wohl ähnlich weit verbreitet wie im Profifußball, eher gegen Null gehend, aus Angst vor Ausgrenzung.”

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In the questionnaire, I asked separate questions about the conditions for homosexual soldiers and the acceptance for non-binary members of the German Armed Forces⁶⁷. Some of the answers were very short, stating they do not know anyone who identifies outside the male-female gender binary but think that gender identity should not play a role in the assessment of a soldier (Member of the German Armed Forces A 2021; Member of the German Armed Forces D 2021; Member of the German Armed Forces G 2021). One of the respondents stated that he doubts that a non-binary person would be readily accepted but also linked that to a general lack of acceptance in society (Member of the German Armed Forces F 2021) – which, as the analysis in chapter 2.2.2 shows, is slowly growing. Another stated that while he cannot make a statement regarding Generation Z, he “cannot do anything with people who do not define as either male or female at all”⁶⁸. The rest of the respondents complained about the media attention the topic of non-binary and transgender members of the forces gets. The reasons stated for the discontent were twofold: on the one hand, the media attention leads to the topic being treated like non-binary and transgender people in the military are a specialty when they should not be, sometimes also blaming the affected persons’ “flaunting” behavior for the fact that it is still seen as an exception and not the norm (Member of the German Armed Forces B 2021; Member of the German Armed Forces E 2021). On the other hand, the strong focus on the treatment of non-binary and transgender members has led to situations that were perceived as unfair treatment since behavior that normally would have been and was reprimanded (according to the respondent, Biefang violated the dress code in force in the barracks in Afghanistan), in this specific case was met with the commander in charge being punished⁶⁹ (Member of the German Armed Forces C 2021). This, in return, caused frustration and lack of understanding among the forces and threw the German Armed Forces back in their effort to create a more tolerant environment (ebd.).

Lastly, I asked the respondents for an overall assessment of whether the German Armed Forces have made progress when it comes to gender equality.⁷⁰ Just as before, the answers were mixed. Especially the female respondents affirmed that there had been a positive development

⁶⁷ Original question: “Mit Generation Z ändert sich das Geschlechterverständnis vom binären Mann-Frau zu einem spektralen Bild. Haben Sie den Eindruck, dass nicht-binäre Menschen in der BW vertreten/anerkannt sind?”

⁶⁸ Original quote: “Nur persönlich möchte ich sagen, dass ich mit einer Person, die nicht wissen (sic), ob sie Männlein oder Weiblein sind, kann ich überhaupt nichts anfangen.”

⁶⁹ Original quote: “Wenn also Frau Biefang in Kabul gegen die dort geltende Kleiderordnung verstößt und ihre Brüste in einer afghanischen Kaserne zeigt, dann muss der dortige Kommandeur reagieren und sie maßregeln. Das erfolgte auch. Im Nachgang wurde der ordnungsgemäß handelnde Kommandeur abgestraft.”

⁷⁰ Due to the early conception of the questionnaire and an unforeseen change of the research question in between sending it out and receiving the answers, the question was more tailored towards being appealing to Generation Z, and not all of the respondents answered the aspect of gender equality.

in this area (Member of the German Armed Forces A 2021; Member of the German Armed Forces E 2021). Contrary, two other respondents were more pessimistic in their perception. One said that since Generation Z is not yet in the position to implement changes that correspond to their values, it will probably take a while until fundamental changes are made, and he has his doubts that rescinding recruitment numbers will cause the German Armed Forces to reconsider their current culture (Member of the German Armed Forces F 2021). Another openly called the implemented and communicated external and internal changes like meetings of the Minister of Defense with non-binary people or the staff element for equal opportunities “image cultivation and symbol politics”⁷¹ and has his doubts whether Generation Z receives the message (Member of the German Armed Forces C 2021).

INTERIM CONCLUSION

The analysis of internal changes shows that changes that align with the societal paradigm change are constantly happening within the German Armed Forces – and the assessment of the interviewed members give the insight that while change is happening, it is happening at a slower pace than the external communication would suggest. Even though I did not mention the paradigm change in the questionnaire sent to the German Armed Forces, one respondent implicitly kept referring to it. In one of his earlier answers, he kept praising the value system of the forces that is the basis of their success and cannot be given but has to be taught, similarly to the traditionalists quoted by Dunivin (1994: 541). In his final assessment, he states that it is going to be interesting to see how things change as soon as Generation Z enters the leadership in the military:

“Since Generation Z is only 26 years old at the most, not much has changed yet, since there are still soldiers in leadership positions who belong to the Baby Boomer generation and Generation X and are still familiar with the proven value system of soldier education and training. It will be exciting and interesting within the BW when Generation Z takes on responsibility and leadership. Hopefully, they will not follow the pendulum law then.”⁷² (Member of the German Armed Forces G 2021)

⁷¹ Original quote: “Der Rest ist Imagepflege und Symbolpolitik (z.B Stabsstelle Vielfalt, Chancengerechtigkeit und Inklusion, Gesprächskreise der Ministerin unmittelbar mit nicht-binären Personen); inwieweit das bei der Generation Z ankommt, halte ich für fragwürdig (nur weil die Angehörigen der Generation Z andere Prioritäten setzen, sind sie ja nicht dumm).“

⁷² Original quote: “Da die Generation Z max. erst 26 Jahre alt ist, hat sich noch nicht viel verändert, da es noch Soldaten in Führungspositionen gibt, die der Generation Baby Boomer und der Generation X angehören und noch mit der bewährten Werteordnung der Soldatenerziehung und Ausbildung vertraut sind. Spannend und interessant wird es innerhalb der BW, wenn die Generation Z in Verantwortung und Führung kommt. Hoffentlich folgen sie

3.2 CHANGES IN THE GERMAN ARMED FORCES

The reference to the pendulum law describes the classic movement of a pendulum to move in the exact opposite direction from its current swing, meaning that he hopes Generation Z will not take the forces in the opposite direction but stick with the proven value order – also known as the combat-masculine warrior paradigm. While internally, the three cornerstones of the intersectional CMW seem to crumble slowly, members like this respondent prove that advocates of the current value order will remain and reject the ongoing paradigm change to a certain degree.

Going back to Dunivin's traditional and evolving models of military culture (1994: 535), the German Armed Forces clearly have an evolving military culture. While conservatism and moralism are still existent and the CMW is slowly being eroded, both the internal changes implemented by the Federal Ministry of Defense and the German Armed Forces themselves are successful. The policies have constantly become more inclusive with the latest law on the rehabilitation of homosexual soldiers trying to right past wrongs. The forces have also become more heterogeneous in all aspects of gender, sexuality, and race, and the attitude is predominantly egalitarian and working towards an equal playing field. The majority/minority interactions are characterized mainly by tolerance instead of hostility, although, as some members have said in their answers, (some) hostility and discrimination against women and LGBTQIA soldiers remain.

dann nicht dem Pegelgesetz.” Based on the context, I assume he refers to the pendulum law (“Pendelgesetz”) and mixed up the terms which is why I corrected the translation to include the right terminology.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION AND PROSPECTS

This master thesis aims to answer the question of how institutions like the German Armed Forces react to paradigm changes in society. After outlining the inherent connection between militarism and masculinity as well as Dunivin's concept of the combat-masculine warrior paradigm and connecting them using the concept of intersectionality, it has become clear that changes in the military cannot only be made by tearing down one system of power such as gender **or** ethnonationalism **or** economy. Instead, **all** interlinking systems need to be identified and eliminated to cause sustainable change. In order to create a military that goes beyond Dunivin's evolving model and has a culture of inclusiveness, heterogeneity, and tolerance plus a modern understanding of traditionalism and gender roles and thus a military in which people of all races, ethnicities, classes, sexualities, and gender identities can serve as equals, the combat-masculine warrior paradigm footed on these three systems of power must be changed.

The politicization of society and especially Generation Z aims at the core of the three systems of power. By mobilizing around the globe and protesting against the current policies regarding climate change and the handling of racism and right-wing extremism, the young generation clearly demonstrates that it will not accept the status quo any longer. Additionally, its members reject the binary gender model and are exploring new ways to express their gender identity, detached from old ideas. This politicization thus marks the peak of a paradigm change in society towards a more sustainable and inclusive way of living, leading to difficulties for institutions as steeped in tradition and strict hierarchies as the military since they become less and less appealing for young people, as declining recruitment numbers show.

The answer to the research question is provided in chapter 3, outlining the external and internal changes the German Armed Forces has implemented over the last few years. Many of the observed changes happened during the previous three years; others, like the inclusion of women, started 21 years ago and are still subject to adaption. The consequences of climate change become more and more apparent and urgent, which forces the Federal Ministry of Defense and the German Armed Forces to reinforce their efforts. The problem of right-wing extremists within the forces is persistent and keeps getting more attention in the media and society. In addition to the ongoing efforts to create equal opportunities and treatment for male

and female soldiers, the shift from a binary towards a spectral understanding of gender already starts demanding adjustments in the German Armed Forces as well. Externally, the German Armed Forces and the Federal Ministry of Defense present as very adaptable to the societal changes by intensifying their external communication regarding the politicized topics. Frequent publications about the measures taken to battle climate change and meetings with representatives of LGBTQIA members of the forces show an increased interest in and awareness of the role these institutions play adjusting of the German Armed Forces' military culture and paradigms to those of the civilian population. Measures like the dissolution of parts of the special command KSK demonstrate a willingness to act consequently. Internally, efforts to implement the changes and teach soldiers the adapted culture have been made, in the case of climate change even since before the topic experienced its latest wave of politicization. The regulations of traditions on the German Armed Forces are an excellent example of the teaching and symbolic components of culture, which the Federal Ministry of Defense also acknowledges and uses to its advantage with the latest revision of the regulations. The inclusion of women and LGBTQIA members of the forces keeps being promoted as well, and interviews with some of them show that it leads to success in some areas. Still, the paradigm change is slower than it might seem based on the external changes that are communicated. The combat-masculine warrior paradigm has not yet fully vanished, but its components are shrinking, and it is losing significance in the military culture of the German Armed Forces.

What does this mean for future research in Feminist Peace and Security Studies and Military Studies? The results of this thesis show that even institutions like the military, which are sometimes perceived as their own world and evidently possess their own culture, are not completely isolated from the changes in civilian society and do react to politicization and changes in paradigms and culture by adapting and – looking at the case of the dissolution of the second division of the KSK – taking structural measures to try to ensure the success of said measures. At the same time, the interviews show that changes in the military culture are not easy to implement sustainably and that the “separatist” and secluded nature of the military might come into play as a factor that slows down the process. Another possible explanation might be the appeal for more traditionalist people to enlist in the military as a space to work with like-minded people and therefore aim to uphold structures based on paradigms like the CMW. Research prospects could consequently lie in the observation of similar behavior in other cases like the US military or Eastern European/Asian armed forces, as well as in revisions of the combat-masculine warrior paradigm under conditions different from the western military

CONCLUSION AND PROSPECTS

cultures. With the ongoing public debates about human rights, racial injustice, climate change, and gender identities, as well as Generation Z's willingness to take these issues to the streets, it is going to be interesting to see how this generation will shape the militaries of tomorrow and whether they fulfill the fear of respondent G and follow the pendulum law.

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